SPECIAL ISSUE

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

IRAQ: WHAT NEXT?

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fundamental issues, they and the United States are in full agreement: We all, especially the nationalist insurgents, want Iraq to be free of foreign jihadists, and we all want U.S. troops out of the country as soon as possible.

Most importantly, however, this so-called "stability first" plan will require an ideological shift in the way the Bush administration conceives of the war. In short, it means abandoning once and for all the fiction that the war in Iraq is the principal front in the war on terrorism. As all but the most ideologically obstinate (read: Dick Cheney) now concede, Iraq is nothing of the sort. And the sooner the United States divorces the two, the sooner it can get its troops out of Iraq and refocus its energies on actually fighting the rapid surge of jihadism throughout the Muslim world—the most devastating legacy of the war in Iraq. With the search for weapons of mass destruction called off, the pursuit of a U.S.-inspired democracy abandoned, and the master plan to rebuild the Middle East permanently shelved, there is but one measure of victory left in Iraq: a safe and speedy withdrawal of U.S. forces, but one that would leave behind a strong and stable federal government. It's time to focus on fixing the Iraq we have, rather than imagining the Iraq we want. ■

Reza Aslan is Middle East analyst for CBS News and author of No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam.

ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER FORCE EVERYONE TO THE TABLE

It's time to make a virtue of necessity in Iraq. The country is sliding into full-blown civil war. The government is weak and getting weaker by the day; it also shows little willingness to make the minimum commitments necessary for stability—amending the constitution to guarantee Sunnis their share of national oil revenue, allowing lower-level Baathist officials to be rehabilitated, and disarming the militias.

The Bush administration and many Democrats have been strenuously resisting these conclusions. But they may, in fact, be our most valuable diplomatic asset. If we accept this reality and plan accordingly, suddenly the tables turn. If we pull out, Iran has a civil war on its borders, as do Syria and Saudi Arabia. All have good reasons to fear this scenario. Suddenly, instead of the United States being tied down in Iraq and thus unable to play a broader role in the region, *Iran* would find itself tied down in Iraq and thus unable to play a broader role in the region, while the United States could go back to being a regional power broker. Syria would likely see an increased flow of refugees as chaos in Iraq worsened. Saudi Arabia would need to contend with the threat posed by Iranian influence among Iraqi Shia. And all three would have to worry about the possibility of Al Qaeda gaining a permanent foothold in Iraq.

As for the warring parties within Iraq, they, too, have plenty of reason to fear a U.S. withdrawal. If we leave, the Shia will have to engage in all-out civil war without the protection of 150,000 U.S. troops. That is a decidedly worse situation than waging a covert civil war under the protection of U.S. forces—which is what the Shia are doing now. The Sunni insurgents will lose the propaganda value of attacking a foreign occupier and will have to recognize that, with U.S. troops gone, Iran would be free to use its oil riches to back the Shia to the hilt. As a result, Sunni forces would face the equivalent of Hezbollah on steroids. And the Kurds, much as they would like formal partition granting them statehood in everything but name, will understand that, without U.S. troops, places like Kirkuk will become bloody battlefields. Equally important, Turkey will no longer be deterred from sending in troops to chase alleged Kurdish terrorists.

In other words, the terrible conditions in Iraq—and the likelihood these conditions would worsen if we left—ultimately could be what allows us to save the country. The United States should announce that we are pulling out unless all parties within and outside Iraq come to the table and hammer out an enforceable peace settlement. Our commitment to withdrawing is newly credible, thanks to the recent midterm elections and the installation of a new secretary of defense. Whatever positive recommendations come out of the Baker-Hamilton Commission, the administration should make clear that phased withdrawal is the alternative—and be prepared to follow through.

Against this backdrop, we and the European Union—and possibly the Russians, although Russia has a strong incentive to keep the entire Middle East on a low boil in order to maintain high oil prices—should organize an Iraqi peace conference, inviting representatives of the Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni communities within Iraq, as well as Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and some of the Gulf states. Plenty of diplomatic ground will have to be plowed first, but we should be able to convene a conference by January. The most important task for the United States is to make unequivocally clear that this is the last chance for all parties to negotiate while U.S. troops are still in Iraq.

An agreement that will stick, however, requires more than undesirable alternatives. We need real carrots, big enough to convince armed camps to disarm and to cooperate in the long, slow slog of rebuilding Iraq. The first could be a Saudi-financed public-works and jobs program for Iraqi civilians. The militia bosses who are offering protection today could be handing out jobs and construction contracts instead. Second would be an amended constitution that guarantees more regional autonomy for different areas within Iraq, combined with a strong enough central government to secure and disburse oil revenue. Third is a regional security forum that would be sponsored by the United States and the European Union to provide a structured and ongoing opportunity for all participants, including Iran and Syria, to negotiate mutual security assurances. Fourth is an EU offer to Iran to help develop its gas fields as an alternative to Russian energy supplies. And fifth would be an offer of *more* U.S. troops to secure and reconstruct Baghdad—for a defined time period and only if the peace agreement holds.

At the same time, the United States should engage other actors within Iraq who have been largely ignored, such as leaders of tribes with many mixed Sunni-Shia marriages and professional associations of doctors and lawyers that could unite Iraqis based on common careers rather than creeds. As American political scientists have long known, a large part of the stability of any representative gov-

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ernment depends on cross-cutting cleavages, hampering the formation of extremist blocs. If we can somehow stop the violence, Iraq still, even now, has the building blocks of a diverse, law-abiding, prosperous society.

And if it doesn't work? If Iraq's various communities and neighbors refuse to cooperate with such a conference? Then we must follow through on our threat to withdraw—more or less. A humanitarian option just short of immediate withdrawal would be to allow as many Iraqi civilians as possible to move to safety behind U.S. troops—neighborhood by neighborhood in Baghdad and province by province in other parts of the country. This would require some U.S. troops to stay in Iraq, at least until the Iraqi army is strong enough to protect these areas. We might also leave enough troops on the borders of Kurdistan and any other area we can realistically protect to create safe routes for fleeing civilians.

This is a strategically unattractive and morally wrenching scenario. But it need not come to pass. Instead of insisting that U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces are making progress, we might try acknowledging just how bad things are. Iraqis and their neighbors would then take seriously our threat to leave. Perhaps by recognizing reality in Iraq, we will manage to avoid making things worse—and with luck, humility, and hard work, we might just manage to make them better. ■

Anne-Marie Slaughter is dean of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and co-director of the Princeton Project on National Security.

LARRY DIAMOND
DEAL WITH THE SUNNIS

The United States is in a quagmire in Iraq because it rushed to war, and then to occupation, without a plan or even a realistic assessment. We must not exit Iraq in the same blind fashion.

We need a plan to stabilize Iraq politically before we exit. Any such plan must have numerous military, economic, and political dimensions. But a key feature should be to split up the Sunni Arab insurgency. This insurgency is already deeply divided between secular (nationalist, Baathist) and religious elements and—within the latter—between Islamists focused on Iraq and hardcore utopian revolutionaries (Salafists like Al Qaeda) who see a U.S. defeat in Iraq as the first step in a global jihadist war. As the Iraqi conflict has worn on, the radical Salafists have become more powerful, more dynamic, and more homegrown. If the United States simply races for the exits, they could make western Iraq a terrorist state-within-a-state like what Al Qaeda built in Afghanistan.

While some American officials have met with insurgent representatives, these talks never have been serious enough to yield anything. We need to negotiate a deal that will induce the tactical insurgents and their tribal networks to turn on the jihadists and crush them, and then stabilize their own region and restrain the larger violence. Such an agreement is possible because the nationalist and Baathist Sunni insurgents want—like the United States—to prevent an Al Qaeda victory in Iraq; they view Iran, not us, as their strategic enemy; and they want a deal that gives them a meaningful share of power and resources.

To get a deal, we need to give reassurances to the nationalist and Baathist Sunnis. First, President Bush must openly disavow any intention of seeking permanent military bases in Iraq. The widespread belief that we are seeking them powerfully motivates Iraqi nationalist resistance (including from radical Shia militias). Second, we need to establish some kind of timetable for U.S. military withdrawal (or at least very substantial drawdown). It need not be immediate. Fearing an Iranian takeover, many Sunni Arab insurgents might accept a timetable stretched over two to three years and keyed to events on the ground. Finally, we have to keep pressing the other Iraqi parties for concessions on outstanding national issues: the federal structure of the country, control over oil, division of the oil wealth, and some rollback of de-Baathification. (Any agreement would also require amnesty for most insurgents, as well as militia fighters.)

At the same time, we must deal directly and more boldly with the constitutional stalemate. Particularly infuriating for Sunni Arabs are the provisions that allow for the formation of a Shia superregion, spanning all nine southern provinces (half the country). With about 70 percent of Iraq's oil deep in the Shia south—and much of the rest in and around Kirkuk, which the Kurds are determined to incorporate—the Sunnis see this as a formula for their defeat. Intense constitutional bargaining is needed to clearly establish the central government's lead role in managing the oil fields; to eliminate the possibility of forming one big, dominant Shia superregion; and to craft a fair and internationally guaranteed formula for dividing the country's oil and gas revenue among the different parts of the country.

Such a diplomatic strategy for rescuing Iraq cannot be managed by the United States alone. We lack the legitimacy, the leverage, and the trust to pull it off. To save Iraq, we must internationalize the mediation effort, bringing in the European Union and the United Nations as full partners. This joint effort could then reach out to engage the neighboring Arab states (including Syria), the Arab League, Turkey, and—not least—Iran. If a viable deal is going to be struck to stabilize Iraq, everyone will have to make concessions. The neighboring Arab states will have to put pressure on the Sunni Arabs, the Iranians on the Shia religious parties, and the Americans on the Kurds. To get the Syrians and the Iranians to press for compromise in Iraq, the United States itself will have to talk directly with them and address their concerns that we are seeking more "regime change."

If it seems that Syria and Iran, and all the internal troublemakers, have the upper hand in Iraq, ponder this: The chaos in Iraq that was good for them in the past now risks spilling over borders and threatening, rather than insulating, the neighboring regimes. Iran—a multinational state that is barely half Persian—must worry about the implications for its own stability of Iraq disintegrating into ethnic pieces. Syria faces a formidable threat from its own Islamic radicals. So do the other Arab neighbors. Thus, there remains scope for a deal, because each of the major players faces serious risks if Iraq disintegrates. These anxieties give the United States leverage that it has so

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Hot Button Issues

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far dared not exercise—but it may have to, by threatening recalcitrant parties that we will withdraw much more rapidly, and in ways that hurt them tactically and strategically, if they do not compromise.

That would be a risky tactic. But, if we cut a deal with the secular Sunni insurgents, we might at least preempt an Al Qaeda victory. And, if we do not get mutual concessions to achieve a constitutional compromise, Iraq will just keep sliding toward all-out civil war, with the United States stuck bloodily in the middle. Sooner or later, that would force a different kind of U.S. exit—far more chaotic, humiliating, and deadly. ■

Larry Diamond is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and author of SQUANDERED VICTORY: THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION AND THE BUNGLED EFFORT TO BRING DEMOCRACY TO IRAQ.

JAMES KURTH
CRUSH THE SUNNIS

U.S. TROOPS MUST LEAVE IRAQ—but not just yet, and not in the manner many Democrats have suggested. Islamists in general, and Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda in particular, are always pointing to past U.S. military retreats—Vietnam in 1975, Lebanon in 1984, Somalia in 1994—as evidence that the American will to wage war invariably collapses as conflicts drag on. As a result, retreating from Iraq now would simply encourage Islamists to attack U.S. allies and targets throughout the world. Before it leaves Iraq, then, the United States must inflict a dramatic and decisive defeat upon the Sunni insurgents—one that will demonstrate the unbearable cost and utter futility of the Islamist dream of establishing a Muslim *umma* under the rule of a global Sunni caliphate. That defeat must be more than military; it must also be political: The United States should divide Iraq into two parts, leaving the Kurds in control of the north, the Shia in control of the south—and the Sunnis stateless in between.

The Sunni Arabs of Iraq have much to answer for. Since they have always made up a rather small minority—about 15 to 20 percent of the country's total population—the regimes they created were historically authoritarian ones. They compensated for their small base by employing especially brutal methods against their Kurdish and Shia neighbors. Successive Sunni governments became steadily more repressive, leading eventually to the rule of the Baath Party and culminating in the ferocious regime of Saddam Hussein.

Baathist Iraq was often compared to Nazi Germany: Saddam was said to play the role of Adolf Hitler and the Baath Party that of the Nazi Party. A more accurate comparison, however, would analogize the Baath Party to the Waffen S.S., the Nazi Party's elite unit, and the Sunni Arab community to the Nazi Party as a whole, which eventually made up as much as 15 percent of Germany's population.

But, unlike their Nazi counterparts in Germany in 1945, the Sunni Arabs in Iraq in 2003 were not totally defeated, devastated, and demoralized by the time their government was toppled. Consequently, they were soon able to initiate and support a vicious insurgency. Even now, when Shia militias are taking their revenge on the Sunni community and only the U.S. military stands in the way of its decimation, opinion polls show that nearly 90 percent of Sunnis approve of insurgent attacks on U.S. troops.

Many commentators have suggested partitioning Iraq into three states—Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni. This would be a good solution in many respects (analogous to the partitioning of the former Yugoslavia), except that any Sunni state would be dominated by an Islamist regime created by the insurgents, who would claim that they had defeated and driven out the U.S. military and would continue to inflict murder and mayhem upon their Shia and Kurdish neighbors. This is why the Sunnis have to be subordinated so that they have no state at all. The result would be an Iraq partitioned into two states—a Shia one in the center (including Baghdad) and the south and a Kurdish one in the north.

Critics of this proposal would no doubt point to the likely reactions of Iraq's neighbors. Wouldn't a Shia state in Iraq simply become an ally or even a puppet of Shia Iran? This would undoubtedly be the case for a few years. But Arabs are unlikely to accept long-term domination by Persians, whatever their religious commonality. An Arab Shia state in Iraq would ultimately become an independent actor (perhaps like communist Yugoslavia quickly became independent of the Soviet Union and communist Vietnam became independent of China). Moreover, with its own rich oil reserves and exports, it would have the economic base to support this independence.

As for the north—wouldn't an independent Kurdistan be opposed by Turkey, which fears such a state on the grounds that it will encourage and enable Kurdish separatists within Turkey itself? Perhaps. At the same time, however, a conservative Kurdish state in Iraq need not end up supporting Kurdish insurgents in Turkey—and could probably be prevailed upon to use its influence to discourage them. Moreover, oil exports from Kurdistan could prove increasingly valuable to Turkey's economy, giving Ankara an incentive to cooperate with partition.

The United States could provide military assistance and diplomatic guidance to the Kurdish state and could also facilitate—through a variety of economic and diplomatic means—the independence of the Shia state from Iran. At the end of the day, the United States would be acting as a balancer—helping to balance the interests of Shia Iraq and Kurdistan and the interests of Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia. U.S. economic interests in a continuing flow of Persian Gulf oil to the global market would be preserved, and U.S. security interests in containing Iran would be enhanced. But the interests of more than 80 percent of the people of Iraq—that is, the Shia and the Kurds—would be enhanced also. They would be the winners in that tormented country's new order. The losers, of course, would be the Sunni Arabs of Iraq, who would have to pay for the sins of the cruel regimes that represented them in the past and the cruel insurgents whom they support today. ■

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JOSEF JOFFE
ALLY WITH THE SUNNIS

THE WAR IN IRAQ IS LOST—AT least the original one, which was to make the place and then all of Arabia safe through democracy.

The "democratic peace"—the idea that only despots make war while democracies are basically pacific—is as old as the republic itself. But not even Woodrow Wilson, the most fervent believer in the idea, went to war against Wilhelmine Germany in 1917 for the sake of democracy. That was the ideological icing on a power-political cake. The Kaiser's U-boats were sinking U.S. ships, and his armies were threatening to devour all of Europe—the pivot of the global balance at the time. Power came first, pedagogy second—never mind the florid rhetoric of transcendence.

Yet Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed no such threat, and this mismeasure of the power realities—the most grievous mistake of statecraft—is the source of all our troubles. In truth, America's hardcore interests were menaced not by Iraq, but by its far more fearsome neighbor to the east, Iran. It is Iran that has sponsored terrorism from Berlin to Beirut, from Hamas to Hezbollah; Iran that has a viable nuclear program; and Iran that boasts the most powerful army east of Israel.

And now, the worst irony: By rushing into Iraq, the United States acted as unwitting handmaiden of Iran. First, by toppling Saddam and dissolving his army, the United States demolished the single-most important barrier to Iranian ambitions. Second, by dismantling the "republic of fear," the United States liberated the Shia majority from Sunni oppression, opening the way for a natural alliance between Qom (Iran) and Najaf (Iraq), the two ecclesiastical centers of Shiism. Third, by threatening Syria, the United States forced both of Iraq's flanking powers—Damascus and Tehran—into a marriage of convenience, which played out nicely in last summer's war in Lebanon. Finally, the United States embroiled itself in an endless insurgency that Iran can manipulate at will.

So the lesson for the future is this: Forget idealpolitik and think realpolitik. If you have to go to war, think security and stability first and democratic transcendence second. The imperative is to contain Iranian ambitions and to prevent a breakup of Iraq that will invite—nay, incite—Syria, Turkey, and Iran to carve up the place. To regain minimal stability, the United States must engineer at least a standoff between the Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds. If you can't beat them, join the weakest to hold off the strongest. This requires a painful change of paradigm: a U.S. deal with the Sunnis, who are the smallest player in this murderous game.

What? With those Baathist thugs? Think again. The Sunnis are fighting for their survival and a chunk of power that will assure them a voice in post-insurgency Iraq. Offer them protection and clout, and so begin to separate the indigenous militias from the foreign jihadists who care not one whit about Iraq but want to humiliate and expel the United States. Think even about reconstituting the Saddamite army—on the simple theory that the "national" force the United States is betting on is a contradiction in terms. Why would Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds—deadly enemies all—add up to a single army just because they wear the same uniforms?

Since the Sunni states in the neighborhood share America's interest in the containment of Iran and its Shia brethren, the United States could count on some useful allies in the background. (No, the Saudis and Jordanians, who have made a living on timidity, won't wade into the fray, but they can help discreetly.)

While masterminding an internal balance, the United States also must take care of external business. The point is not to salvage the Iraqi nation-state—a fiction if ever there was one—but to save Iraq's national space from neighboring predators. The tool here is deterrence, and the method is regrouping. Position U.S. forces athwart the most likely invasion routes from Syria and Iran and so signal to both that they would have to attack the United States if they attack Iraq.

The benefits are obvious. "Tripwire" or deterrent forces require fewer troops than the current order of battle. And, if fight they must, they can do so far from urban settings and play out their natural advantages: mobility, precision, and airpower. Fight them on your terms, not in densely populated Falluja.

What's wrong with this prescription? Alas, the United States, unlike imperial Great Britain, is not cut out for such a game. It demands too much dexterity and cynicism. It requires ditching lofty principles and acting in strictly strategic terms. Support whomever is weakest so as to maintain a balance of power on the inside, but not too much lest your favorite du jour goes on a killing spree against the other two.

Scratch the rhetoric of regime change in Iran and Syria, but draw a line in the sand and threaten them with every B-2 and B-52 in the U.S. arsenal if they cross it. And then, with minimal exposure of your own (reduced) forces, dig in for the long haul. The message to friends and foes must be: We will be here forever because we can't afford to tuck tail—not in the world's most critical strategic arena. ■

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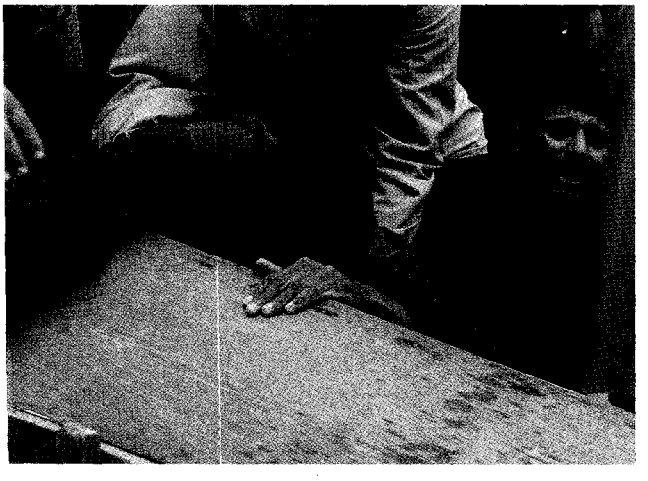
IRAQIS GRIEVE AT A FUNERAL IN NAJAF, NOVEMBER 13, 2006



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NIALL FERGUSON
BRIBE THE INSURGENTS

FROM THE HISTORIAN'S PERSPECTIVE, it is not hard to see what went wrong in Iraq. Not enough men in the wake of Saddam Hussein's defeat. Not enough money to incentivize local collaboration. Not enough ruthlessness when the insurgency first began. Not enough diplomacy to buy and hold international support. Oh yes, and not enough historical knowledge. (It's only in the *Star Wars* movies that an empire can create its own reality.)

This is not the first time that a U.S. military intervention has produced a debacle, and the tragic fate of South Vietnam is far from the sole precedent. The history of Central America and the Caribbean offers numerous others. In Guatemala in the 1950s and 1960s, a U.S.-backed regime change was the prelude to a protracted civil war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

By any meaningful definition, a similar process is now underway in Iraq. According to the unofficial Iraq Body Count, more than 47,000 civilians have been reported killed since the U.S. invasion; on the basis of household surveys, however, the *Lancet* recently estimated deaths due to violence at 600,000. A rising proportion of this violence is sectarian in character. There were ten times as many sectarian attacks in July as in January.

The cycle of sectarian violence is already well-established in the capital, despite recent U.S. efforts to "clear and hold" trouble spots. In the last two months, however, the killing has spread centrifugally into neighboring provinces, leading to bloodbaths in places like Duluiyah, a predominantly Sunni town north of Baghdad, and Balad, a neighboring Shia enclave. There also has been an upsurge of violence between Kurds and Arabs in Kirkuk. American dreams of devolving responsibility for security to the country's own army and police forces are becoming nightmares. Elements in these same forces are among the most flagrant perpetrators of ethnic cleansing.

History strongly suggests that, once such internecine warfare gets underway, it is extremely hard to stop without external intervention. Violence begets more violence. Vendettas poison relations between neighbors. Though low-intensity conflict can continue inconclusively for decades (think of Sri Lanka), it is also possible for the killing to increase exponentially (Bosnia, Rwanda) until large-scale ethnic cleansing has created homogeneous statelets.

Quite apart from the economic effects of this crisis—higher oil prices, slower growth—the international political consequences are bad and getting worse. The deterioration of Iraq may well be increasing the risk of terrorist attacks on the United States itself, according to leaked details of the latest National Intelligence Estimate. At the same time, this screwup has brought the United States into greater international disrepute than at any time in its history, reducing its ability to deal with other threats and crises.

This is a truly calamitous state of affairs. The big problem is that few, if any, of the options reportedly being considered by the Baker-Hamilton Commission offer credible solutions. Any timetable for U.S. withdrawal will merely reward the men of violence. Any political decentralization will merely accelerate the country's bloody disintegration. Most attention therefore has focused on Baker's anticipated "realism" with respect to third parties, specifically Syria and Iran. Dialogue with these former pariahs, he has hinted, may help to stabilize Iraq. But, if this is the best he can come up with, he should have stuck to dimpled chads. From a truly realist perspective, both of those notorious sponsors of terrorism have a clear interest in exploiting America's weakness. Opening channels to Damascus and Tehran will bring little joy to Washington—and much humiliation.

So, are there any other options? Or must we brace ourselves for helicopters airlifting the last Americans from the Green Zone and the bloody breakup of Iraq? I can think of only three possibilities. The first is simply to start paying Iraqis to disarm and seek peaceful employment. It has become conventional wisdom that the U.S. presence in Iraq is disastrously expensive. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel-winning economist, forecasts a total cost of between $1 and $2 trillion, depending on whether the U.S. presence in Iraq ends in 2010 or 2015. Such numbers sound terrifying—although, as an annual expenditure in relation to gross domestic product (1.1 percent at most), this still remains a comparatively cheap war. The real problem has been twofold. First, a large fraction of the money spent has gone to supplying U.S. troops. Second, far too much of the money earmarked for economic reconstruction has been pocketed by poorly monitored contractors. The result has been a kind of reverse Marshall Plan, in which U.S. money has gone to ... Americans. As a result, instead of economic recovery helping to embed democracy, economic stagnation has fueled civil war. Yet, with a fraction of the money that goes to our boys' cheeseburgers, you could buy and decommission all the AK-47s in Iraq.

Step two would be to implement what might be called a British-style strategy, in the spirit of Gertrude Bell. Leave Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki be. Concentrate instead on buying the support of tribal sheiks. Point to the most prosperous Arab countries in the region—all of which are monarchies—and ask the sheiks how much richer and happier they all would be if the Hashemites had not been overthrown in 1958.

Step three is the most important: Ignore the Syrians and the Iranians and focus instead on (a) the permanent members of the Security Council, (b) the Germans, and (c) the Japanese. All—with the exception of Russia—stand to lose economically if Iraq spirals into the abyss. True, the internationalization of conflict zones cannot turn sows' ears into silk purses. But Sarajevo today is better than Sarajevo ten years ago.

More money, old elites, plus the United Nations: It's a formula calculated to make a neocon weep. But, then, the neocons should be weeping already. Their dreams of a democratic domino effect long ago went up in smoke. It is time not just for realism, but for realistic realism. And that means giving Iraqis some serious incentives to stop killing one another. That, and not the timing of this latest U.S. retreat from empire, must be our priority. ■

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A DEFACED PAINTING OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN BASRA, NOVEMBER 4, 2006

MICHAEL WALZER
TALK, TALK, TALK

I AM NOT SURE THAT THERE IS ANYthing that we can do with our army in Iraq that won't make things worse than they are. That may be an un-American sentiment. (Isn't there always something to do, and aren't we always the ones who can do it?) But what are our options? Should we "stay the course"? That only means more of the same awfulness. Bring in more troops? That might have worked a few years ago; now, it would only generate more resistance and make the awfulness more awful. In any case, it is politically impossible here at home. Withdraw immediately? That would most likely bring on a full-scale civil war (no, what is going on now isn't yet a full-scale civil war). Withdraw slowly and leave behind a partitioned country? At this point, there seems no way of establishing the borders of the three parts or of dividing the oil revenue short of the same civil war.

So we can't win the fight and we can't just stop fighting. And that means that we are up against it: We have to talk. This has not been a talking administration. Well, there are a lot of ideological pronouncements, some of them actual arguments, some of them boosterism and ballyhoo, some of them a kind of self-reinforcement. But real talk with other people who have different ideas—that hasn't been common in the last six years. And, now, it is necessary.

There have to be four sets of talks. First, talks among all the sects and factions in Iraq itself—with the United States watching and listening but not, at least not at first, participating. If the Iraqis reach some kind of rough agreement, then we should join the discussions. It might be useful to set a deadline and threaten to withdraw our troops, but I think that the Iraqis know by now that the duration of our stay in their country is limited. They know that most Americans want to get out, and the proof of the ardency of our wish is that pretty much any of the possible compromises that they might come up with would be acceptable to us (though we can't allow a coalition of Shia and Sunni Arabs to take shape against the Kurds).

Second, talks between the United States and all the neighboring states that have an interest in the eventual outcome of the war: Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. A conference of these states might be useful, but it probably can't be convened without bilateral talks between each of them and the United States. We have interests in common with these states—even with the Iranians, as our brief Afghan cooperation indicates. The current refusal to talk, without conditions, to the leaders of Syria and Iran is a terrible mistake. There are a lot of things we shouldn't do, especially at the behest of Syria and Iran, without insisting that crucially important conditions be met—but talking isn't one of them.

Third, talks between the United States and its European allies about how to support any emerging settlement of the war—and also about how to limit and contain the dangers that are now pretty certain to come with the settlement. We need Europe as a partner, but that must mean a real partner, ready to share responsibility for how things go in places like the Gulf.

Fourth, and finally, talks between the Bush administration and all other factions in American politics. Maybe the Baker-Hamilton Commission represents the beginning of a discussion of this sort, but the list of participants needs to be extended to include the current leaders of the Democratic Party and the growing number of discontented Republicans. The outcome in Iraq is not going to come close to what the ideological optimists in the administration hoped for; nor will it come close to what the imperial tough guys wanted. It is not going to be pretty from any perspective. Ultimate responsibility for this falls—and should be made to fall—on President Bush and his advisers. On the other hand, the Democrats, now that they have taken control of Congress, will want to do everything they can to avoid stab-in-the-back recriminations and divisive debates about who "lost" Iraq. It is probably best for everyone concerned that the endgame be a bipartisan production. That will take a lot of talking, since there hasn't been a more partisan administration than this one in my lifetime, and American politics has not been so noisy and discordant for a long time. But, if the Bush people discover that they can talk to the Iranians, they might find that they can also talk to the Democrats.

Talk, talk, talk—the repetition of that word commonly carries a pejorative meaning. But, right now, it represents the most sensible policy prescription. ■

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MARTIN PERETZ IGNORE JAMES BAKER

THE MAN WHO HAS COME TO rescue U.S. policy in Iraq is actually the man who rescued Saddam Hussein twice. The first time came early during the presidency of George Bush *père*. It was James Baker who was in charge, tending Saddam's wounds and building up his arms. At that moment, the Baath dictatorship was still reeling from its brutal eight-year war with Iran, a conflict that presaged the uncivil strife occurring in Mesopotamia now. The second time was toward the close of the first Bush presidency, and Baker was still in charge. Iraq had been forced back from the invasion of a country it had intended to annex. The logic of the victory should have suggested unseating the aggressor—a man at once reckless and conniving, hated by (most of) his countrymen and feared by (all of) his neighbors.

But that logic never penetrated the victors, who maintained Saddam in Baghdad with the goal of keeping him on a tight rope and constraining his economy by a regime of sanctions. Such a regime has rarely worked. He turned out to be especially adept at manipulating it against his longtime domestic victims and for his sectarian, familial, and geographical allies. This suffering was neither here nor there for the especially visible members of the coalition that had defeated him. Arab solidarity does not cut across doctrinal lines. This was only one reason why pan-Arabism turned out to be a roaring tiger but one without teeth.

The primary consideration of Saudi Arabia, for example, was that a Sunni government of one sort or another—like the ones that had been in place since Gertrude Bell (the T.E. Lawrence of the north) installed the Emir Faisal as king in Baghdad 70 years earlier—not be displaced. This meant a permanent minority was to be in power. And, if history was an accurate predictor, it would be a brutal minority at that. A neighboring Shia state would be an enormous discomfort for the royals in Riyadh. I don't want to be cavalier about this, since, to say the least, nationhood is not a fully matured notion among the Arabs. And, if I were a responsible Saudi official, I, too, would worry greatly if adjacent Iraq became an official Shia state, especially given how the Shia minority fared under Sunni rule of the Arabian peninsula.

Almost uncannily, Baker's instincts and convictions meshed (and mesh still) with the House of Saud. Forgive me for appearing like a Marxist—a vulgar Marxist, no less. But the Carlyle Group of which Baker has been a top factotum is much at home with the Sunni princely and investor dynasts. Their compatibility is almost primordial—and also very practical.

Let's face it: The Baker-Hamilton Commission is a desperate rescue operation for the Iraqi Sunnis. George W. Bush has gotten us all into trouble, and he will now be taken to the woodshed by his father's faithful but resentful lieutenant. George W. never really liked Baker. (But who actually does?) The president might even muse to himself that, had Baker—and his dad—not saved Saddam 15 years ago, he would not have had the chore to do for himself. He probably wouldn't relish the irony of reading a speech by then-Senator Al Gore on September 29, 1992, lambasting the first Bush administration—and Baker, in particular—for leaving the despot-aggressor in power.

Michael Kinsley has written a characteristically hilarious and insightful column in *Slate*, "BAKE ME A CAKE, BAKER MAN: WHY THE BAKER COMMISSION WON'T FIX IRAQ." It focuses on the predictably "blue-ribbon" members of this gathering of senior citizens. Or, as Mike writes, "This is one torch that has not been passed to a new generation, although former Virginia senator and presidential son-in-law Charles Robb (age 67) is a fresh face in the pool of Washington Wise Men." But perhaps he forgot that, aside from Baker, two other members of the commission have sins to atone for with regard to Saddam as well: Larry Eagleburger and Alan Simpson, who, in April 1990, lectured the "haughty and pampered" Western press that dared report Baathist abuses. And what, by the way, is Vernon Jordan doing on this particular commission of sages?

The truth is that commissioners rarely do the real work of the commission. That is done by its subalterns. It is true that this group is numerous and various. But several names ring alarms: Chas Freeman, Shibley Telhami, William Quandt, Phebe Marr, Marina Ottaway, Augustus Richard Norton—all fading apologists for the exhausted Sunni solution to everything.

What I fear is that the thrust of the moment is to restore as much of the old orthodoxies as possible. They haven't worked for more than two decades, even as superficially as they did before, when resentments were festering not only among the Shia, but among ever more pious—and, yes, fanatical—Sunnis as well. Their ranks, too, are swelling.

Sorry! Give George W. Bush his due. He took down the Taliban. And he also took down the savage Caesar. These are achievements. What he did not grasp—and what, for that matter, Baker and those for whom he speaks also do not grasp—is the sheer and relentless butchery of which both Sunni and Shia are capable. The fiendish barbarism of decapitated heads and mutilated bodies is now a reflex of the warriors and nothing exceptional, a commonplace. Even the bare rudiments of civilization will not soon come back to the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

So what is to be done? Inevitably, Baker will deploy the only trick he knows: force Israel to retreat to the 1967 lines. OK, it can't be forced. Then at least hold a peace conference. The 1991 peace conference actually accomplished nothing, except to pay Bush-Baker's debt to their partners in the Kuwait coalition. And the Oslo accords—also nothing. In any case, although many people believe a resolution of the Palestine question is the key to everything, it is actually a key to nothing but itself. It would not affect the bloodshed in Iraq. It would not even affect the strife in Lebanon. It also would not calm the anxieties of the Saudi monarchy. Or the clamor for freedom in Egypt. Well, if a peace settlement doesn't douse these fires, another blue-ribbon panel surely will rise to the challenge. ■

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LEON WIESELTIER
TRY ANYTHING

OF ALL THE EXASPERATIONS OF this war, the most stinging is that its beginning is not all you need to know about its ending. The high reasons for the war were attended by fantasy, ignorance, and deceit. This cannot be denied. And in view of such origins, the temptation to insist upon a swift evacuation is very great. Almost 3,000 Americans have been killed, and more than 20,000 Americans have been wounded; and 150,000 Iraqis have been killed, according to the Iraqi government, in the fratricide that the war unleashed. 150,000: we are approaching a Saddam-like magnitude for the murder of innocents. If savagery at this scale continues, and the quest for Iraqi democracy suffers blow after blow at the hands of the Iraqis themselves, the overthrow of the dictator will have to be considered, morally speaking, almost a wash. Who would not want us to get out of this carnage and chaos? It is also perfectly understandable to wish to see the architects of this enterprise—Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and a variety of local neoconservative legends who are now explaining, for the sake of their ideological pristinity and their earning power, that this was not, alas, the war they had in mind—pay a price. But what price would Iraq, and the United States, pay, were we simply to withdraw?

For a long time I shared the view that it was the refusal of the United States to send more troops that was responsible for the failure to establish stability and decency (but not democracy, which cannot be established by force or by fiat) in Iraq; that all that stood between us and our grand objectives was Rumsfeld and his outside-the-box boorishness; that he *was* the box. I still have no doubt that more American troops would significantly improve the security situation in a few central and nasty places. But the security situation is at bottom the social-cultural situation. It seems increasingly clear to me that the blame for the violence in Iraq, and for its frenzied recoil from what Fouad Ajami hopefully called "the foreigner's gift," belongs to the Iraqis. Gifts must not be only given, they must also be received. I say this without condescension. Quite the contrary: the denial of the historical agency of the people of Iraq is the real condescension. For three-and-a-half years, the Iraqis have been a free people. What have they done with their freedom? Yes, the fledgling institutions of some sort of democracy have been established; but the story of liberated Iraq is hardly one of a struggle for liberalism—our kind of liberalism, their kind of liberalism, anybody's kind of liberalism. It is a grisly tale of tribal butcheries, of ethnic and religious wrath, of fear bred by vengeance and vengeance bred by fear. Sunni violence cannot be explained only by Shia violence. Shia violence cannot be explained only by Sunni violence. (Sistani is the new Khatami, the reasonable and pragmatic holy man, the Madisonian mullah, who turns out to be unable or unwilling to restrain anything.) After we invaded Iraq, Iraq invaded itself. There seems to be only communitarian love and communitarian hatred; the death of universalism, or the failure of universalism to be born; and death. Also, more than a million Iraqis have left the country: immigration is another sort of universalism.

The perplexity for the United States is that the Iraqi era of armed identity has significant strategic consequences. Iran, too, has been given the foreigner's gift, and so has Al Qaeda. The fracturing of Iraq represents the fulfillment of one of Iran's fondest dreams; and all the ancient and fascinating differences between Najaf and Qom notwithstanding, I find it hard to believe that the collapse of the Iraqi state would not leave Iraqi Shiism in the orbit of Iran, which is skillfully in pursuit of regional hegemony. And whether or not an American departure from Iraq would leave a vacuum for Al Qaeda to fill—there are no vacuums in Iraq, which is the problem—the war has already had the opposite of its intended effect of diminishing terrorism. Inside Iraq, state terrorism has been replaced by nonstate terrorism; outside Iraq, the war has inspired terrorist networks and terrorist attacks.

Does all this pessimism warrant withdrawal? I will confess that I wish it did. Since I was a supporter of the war, I have its consequences also on my own conscience. I do not believe that American troops should die for some heartless Kissingerian notion of American credibility in the world, or the like. (Anyway, it is the war itself that is doing the most damage to American credibility. After terrorism, the most immediate problem for American foreign policy in the age of Bush is anti-Americanism.) Even if we withdraw from Iraq, we will be a spectacularly powerful country whose enemies should still beware. And moral reasoning about such matters should be efficient: in the lag between the conclusion that we should withdraw, if that is what we conclude, and our withdrawal, Americans will pointlessly perish. For all these reasons, I am not inclined to dismiss all the antiwar voices in Congress and elsewhere as a depraved isolationism or another Peter, Paul, and Mary concert. This war has not been a glittering success, and its costs have been considerable. And I have never felt comfortable with the America in whose name this administration has conducted this war: in times of danger one tries to overlook differences about other issues and other challenges, but I do not agree that only a state preemptive of civil rights, treaty obligations, and international alliances—that only the preemptive state—can adequately defend itself.

Yet I am unable to conclude that we should quit. We cannot quit on moral grounds, because we have an obligation to assist the secular democracy-builders in Iraq, the heroes in the wreckage, whose cause is not yet lost, and we have an obligation to protect the Kurds. And we cannot quit on strategic grounds, because of the gains to Iran and to the terrorist international. So what should we do? Briefly, anything and everything. An increase in troop deployments for the mastery of Baghdad, upon which a great deal depends (if order is not established, nothing good will be established); reform of the Iraqi military, or of what passes for the Iraqi military; redeployment to less provocative locations; a federal arrangement of the Iraqi state; an international conference (but about Iraq, not Palestine); an attempt to flip Syria to our side, which is not beyond the diplomatic imagination; anything and everything. If we leave, or if we stay the bleeding course, things will get even worse. I am not sure that an administration as clumsy and rigid and self-adoring as the Bush administration is capable of the dexterity that this crisis now requires. (Rumsfeld was not fired for the results of the war. He was fired for the results of the election.) And I am not sure that any or all of this will work. We are at the mercy of Iraq, where there is no mercy. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Altering States

IT HAPPENS TO ALMOST EVERY SUCcessful director, and it has certainly happened to Pedro Almodóvar: he has entered the Age of the Larynx. In this age, sheer talk—the interview—becomes as much a part of a director's life as anything other than directing itself. Almodóvar interviews flood the press, especially just before a new film appears. He is more supple and funny than most directors can be, but even he can indulge in interview lingo. (From a recent one: "What always attracts me, and it's almost a physical need, is a project that's completely different from my previous one." And: "I enjoy the transparency of neorealism.") Oddly, despite our experience, several of those interviews apropos of Almodóvar's new film, VOLVER, made us expect a film of his highest quality, which is high indeed. *Volver* disappoints.

VOLVER
(Sony Pictures Classics)

IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS
(Typecast Releasing with HBO)

After all Almodóvar's interview talk about returning to his roots (some of the film takes place in a village), the three months of rehearsal with his cast (no better ensemble playing than what we can see in any well-made picture), the very serious shopping and hair-styling (the usual amusing Almodóvar glitz), and the hints of spiritual depth, we get a porridge-consistency story, full of explanations rather than drama. It all hangs on two final revelations—one of them a reminder of Polanski's *Chinatown* and the other about a woman's return from the dead. (The title means "to return.") And this comedy-drama about people we are supposed to like allows them to murder a man, bury him, and forget about him: nothing whatever is done about the crime. Perhaps it is because he was male, and a beast; and not unusually in his work, Almodóvar's chief sympathy is with women. That unlucky man stumbled into the wrong film.

Penélope Cruz, gorgeous and talented, plays a restaurant employee, the mother of an adolescent girl, the wife of a louse, the sister of a hairdresser, and the niece of a decrepit aunt. All these factors and more are continually stirred around for most of two hours until we reach the plot tricks that clear up the difficulties. In transit these toings-and-froings are handled—despite the sludgy story—with Almodóvar's dexterity and also with typical Almodóvar settings and dress that just manage to be realistic instead of extravagant. But throughout we keep waiting for the real Almodóvar film, and it never arrives.

He made his reputation with pictures that crackled and spat and sliced and mocked the strict conventions of contemporary Spain—including the church. These films were refreshing in their daring, their chuckling vengeance, and, basically, the realization that without all these oppressions he wouldn't be the artist he had become. In *Volver*, despite a few dabs of what is meant to be candor, I could see only one real glimpse of the old Almodóvar. At one point, Cruz visits her sister and says she has to piss. (That's the word in the subtitles.) We then get a three- or four-second shot of Cruz on the toilet. That shot is completely extraneous to the film, but we can almost hear Almodóvar deciding to throw a snippet to his old-time fans.

Most of the picture, however, is soap opera done by an artist—plotty complications, plotty illness (a woman develops cancer), petty quarrels, equally petty reconciliations—almost as if Almodóvar were showing us that Douglas Sirk, another artist turned soapist, is not forgotten. Our disappointment is not that he has left his earlier mode, but that he left it without conviction and drive. Instead, we feel only that he has exhausted the spirit that launched him and is now making up stories to keep busy. I suppose that if he keeps on in this latter-day manufacturing vein, we can expect more lengthy interviews.

An admiring word about Cruz. She seems to me the present-day film figure closest to Sophia Loren, very much a person of a particular culture but with global appeal—and with humor, warmth, extraordinary beauty, sufficient vulgarity, and sufficient class.

James Longley is an American maker of documentaries, now in his mid-thirties, who studied film in the United States and in Moscow and in 2002 made a film about Palestine called *Gaza Strip*. His new film is IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS, a considerable achievement because of what it does and what, as Longley knew, it could not do.

He spent two years in Iraq, apparently accompanied only by translators. (His picture is well shot, sometimes even lovely; he acknowledges help in all the technical work after the three hundred hours of film were done, but the actual shooting is his.) His intent was clear. He says in his notes (and it is evident in the film): "It was never my intention to make a 'war documentary.' I wanted to make a film about Iraq, the people of Iraq." A war documentary would, in some ways, have been simpler.

For his own purposes, Longley divided Iraq in three parts—or, rather, he accepted the three existing divisions: Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. For part one of his film he lived in a Sunni district of Baghdad and concentrated on an eleven-year-old auto mechanic, slipping into the lives of the boy, his employer, acquaintances. For part two he went to the Shiite region of Najaf and became friends with a young man who is the head of a nationalist organization. Through him, Longley followed all the inevitable ramifications. Part three inevitably was in Kurdish country. Longley lived in a hamlet near an oil plant. Here his method was to avoid groups and to concentrate on ordinary folk—farmers, traders, and so on. Here he found the strongest pro-American feeling.

Every moment of Longley's film is

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interesting, and the more we watch, the more clearly we realize that the film cannot solve anything for us. Some Iraqis love America; some think America is a curse and cannot wait for our troops to leave. Some hated Saddam Hussein; some wish he were back again, because at least the streets were safe—from individual criminals, if not from Saddam himself.

So we are left with a copious collection of intimacies, some remarkable faces, some affecting tiny details of daily life, some poignancies, some astonishing backwardness—all filmed well. And we are also left with the old nagging questions about documentaries. Who pointed the camera? Who did the editing? Whose truth amid the available truths, none of which is complete, are we getting? One point, however, we are certainly convinced of. Longley is a film-maker of intelligence and empathy. ■

JENNIFER HOMANS ON DANCE
The Memory of an Art

I.

CLASSICAL BALLET TODAY has enormous prestige, but not because it is thought to be aesthetically innovative or cutting-edge. Its current stature rests more on its tradition and its past. In recent years we have seen lavish productions and reconstructions of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century classics performed across Europe, Russia, and America by the Kirov Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet, American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, the Royal Ballet, and the Paris Opera Ballet. The modernist project of making ballet "new" is subsiding, and we are settling into a curatorial age dedicated to preserving the old. Ours is the era of the canon.

But what is the canon in classical ballet? In most arts, such a question would trigger passionate and even rancorous debate. Not so in ballet. A few works are universally known and accepted as "the classics": from the nineteenth century, *La Sylphide*, *Giselle*, *Coppélia*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *La Bayadère*; from the twentieth century, *Les Sylphides*, *Petrouchka*, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, *Apollo*, *Serenade*, *Concerto Barocco*, and *Agon*. Many would expand the list to include other works of the modern era by Jerome Robbins, Antony Tudor, Frederick Ashton, and Kenneth MacMillan; and we might easily agree to add more ballets by George Balanchine. But few would dispute the core group, which constitutes the canon in classical ballet today.

If we look closely, however, this list is quite peculiar. It includes only a handful of ballets, most of which originated in nineteenth-century France or late imperial Russia, with a smattering of twentieth-century works—and many of those by Russian-born choreographers. Even the nineteenth-century French ballets we have today are not really French: *La Sylphide* premiered in Paris in 1832, but the version we know originated in Denmark in 1836. *Giselle* was first performed in Paris in 1841, but as two French scholars have ruefully noted, "The only and true *Giselle* is Russian"—the version we know derives from the St. Petersburg production of 1884. *Coppélia*, from 1870, is in fact the only truly French ballet in the canon. This is quite remarkable, considering that the fundamental precepts of the art form were codified in France in the seventeenth century, and ballet has enjoyed an unbroken tradition there to the present day.

As a result, most people think that ballet is Russian. No wonder. It was in St. Petersburg that Marius Petipa, a French ballet master who worked at the imperial court from 1847 until just before his death in 1910, created *La Bayadère* in 1877, *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890, and *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* (in collaboration with Lev Ivanov) in 1892 and 1895 respectively. Mikhail Fokine's *Les Sylphides* was also produced in St. Petersburg, in 1907. The Maryinsky-trained Vaslav Nijinsky created *L'après-midi d'un faune* in Paris in 1912. The canonical works of George Balanchine were made in Paris and New York—*Apollo* in 1928, *Serenade* in 1934, *Agon* in 1957—but they drew on his St. Petersburg origins and training. The ballet canon, then, describes a tradition that is overwhelmingly Russian and only begins in the late nineteenth century. It would be as if the Western musical canon began with Tchaikovsky and ended with Stravinsky.

What is striking about this list is not what it includes but how much it excludes. The canon does not account for the ballets of Jean-Georges Noverre, who worked across Europe in the eighteenth century and radically transformed the art form. We have nothing from Pierre Gardel, a prominent ballet master at the Paris Opera for the decades between 1787 and 1829 and the author of dozens of ballets widely known at the time. Missing also are the ballets of Salvatore Viganò, known for his early nineteenth-century danced dramas, and the work of Jules Perrot, who was responsible for much of the dancing in *Giselle* and the author of many other ballets. Closer to our own time, the canon does not include Nijinsky's legendary *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and we have only a few (rarely performed) works by Leonide Massine, the Russian-émigré choreographer whose ballets were much admired in the first half of the twentieth century. And there are many more.

When we think that in the course of the past three hundred years ballet has had a vital presence in France, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, the German-speaking and Italian-speaking lands, Britain, and America, this diminished list is really quite extraordinary. But it is not surprising. For the canon in ballet is not a list of what is worthy, or fashionable, or even politically correct. It is, quite simply, all we've got. The rest of the works in the history of this art have been forgotten.

WHY FORGOTTEN? HERE we come to the bane of classical ballet: notation. Over the course of the last three centuries, many ballet masters have tried to invent an enduring and standardized system for writing down dances, but none has succeeded. This is largely because notation systems have been anchored to specific historical moments in the evolution of dance, and have been unable to expand sufficiently to incorporate developments or breaks in the tradition: as the dance changes, the notation becomes outmoded. In the late seventeenth century, Louis XIV ordered his ballet masters to find a way to "make dance understood on paper," and in 1700 Raoul-Auger Feuillet published

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a system that was highly successful and widely used to record and to disseminate dances of the French court and society.

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the aristocratic dance forms that Feuillet's notation was designed to record changed quite dramatically. By 1760, Jean-Georges Noverre proclaimed Feuillet's notation useless. It had only worked, he explained, when the steps were simple, whereas today "steps are complicated, they have doubled and tripled; they have mixed together so that it is very difficult to write them down, and even harder to decipher any such notation." Another dancing master explained that "for some years now, we have been seeing a bastard choregraphy." And indeed, manuscripts of dances from the late eighteenth century look like "bastard" Feuillet scores, crowded with stick figures and makeshift sketches scrawled in the margins. The strict social codes and spatial patterns that had structured ballet for nearly one hundred years were breaking down. By the end of the eighteenth century, the scrawls in the margins had taken over, and Feuillet's system fell out of use.

In the nineteenth century, to take another example, the Danish choreographer August Bournonville tried for years to come up with a system for writing down dances. His extensive notes show him constantly updating and adding new symbols, as if he were trying to keep up with the changes overtaking his notation—for many of which he was himself responsible. Similarly, the Russian dancer Vladimir Stepanov no sooner published his system in 1892 than it was modified, not least by Nijinsky and then Massine, who both learned it at the Imperial Ballet School but found it inadequate. And their modifications never made it out of the desk drawer.

Closer to our own time, the notation systems created by Rudolf Laban in 1928 and Rudolf Benesh in 1956 claim to be universal languages with wide application. But to master either system requires several years of dedicated study, and even then the process of notating a ballet can be excruciating, and the cost prohibitive. Michele Braban, a choreologist hired by the Royal Ballet in 1990 to notate Frederick Ashton's *La Fille mal gardée*, calculated in despair that it had taken her nearly nine hours to record one minute of dance. The Royal Ballet has used the Benesh system since its invention and has several choreologists on its staff today, but this is faint praise: after some fifty years of use, Benesh remains the province of a few highly trained experts. Few dancers or choreographers speak its language.

And what about film? Film was initially quite expensive, and so the early record of filmed dances is spotty. Video is now widely used, but this is recent. Only a handful of ballets were recorded during the lifetimes of Balanchine, Ashton, Tudor, and Robbins. Moreover, the repertory on video is not only thin, it can also be deceptive. Lighting, camera angles, the vagaries of particular performances: all these conspire to limit the usefulness of such records. A rare film of Balanchine's *La Valse*, for example, apparently shows the steps clearly—but the audio is several beats out of sync.

To date, then, there is no reliable way to "make dance understood on paper," as the Sun King had hoped. This does not mean that notation has been unimportant in ballet's history: to the contrary, dancers were constantly trying to write down what they knew, and a score—however flawed—was often taken as evidence of mastery. But the fact remains that ballet is a physical art recorded and stored in the bodies of dancers. The only way to learn a ballet is to be taught it by another dancer. Which means that to understand how we got the canon that we have, we have to trace back along the path of dancers, carefully following the human chain that brought a ballet from its origins to the present.

COURTESY PITTMAN PUBLISHING

Pas de deux from* Achille et Deidamie, *1804

II.

Consider the history of *Giselle*. A staple in the repertory of most major ballet companies today, it premiered in 1841 at the Royal Academy of Music in Paris, with music by Adolphe Adam; scenario by Vernoi de Saint-Georges, Théophile Gautier, and Jean Coraly; costumes by Paul Lormier; and décor by Pierre Cicéri. The choreography was by Coraly and Jules Perrot (though the latter was not fully credited until later). It starred the young Italian ballerina Carlotta Grisi and the dancer Lucien Petipa. Predictably, the choreography was not recorded. As a result, we know quite a lot about the scenario, musical score, sets, and designs, but much less about the original steps and movements.

The story tells of Giselle, a young girl in a medieval Rhineland village, and Albrecht, a young duke who poses as a villager in order to woo her. She falls in love with him, but his ruse is exposed and Giselle learns that Albrecht is actually betrothed to Bathilde, a woman of his own social rank. Brokenhearted, she goes mad and dies. All this in act 1. The second act takes place at night in the forest. Giselle has become one of the Wilis, young brides-to-be who die before their marriage day. Unsettled souls with a vengeful compulsion to dance, they rise from their graves to prey on any man who strays into their midst, forcing him to dance to his death. Albrecht, in search of Giselle's grave, is

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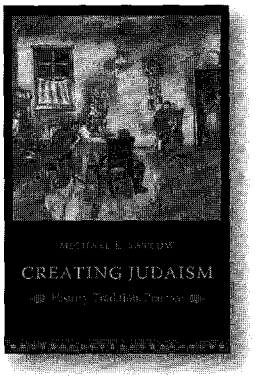
attacked by the Wilis, and their leader forces Giselle to seduce him with her dance. In the end Albrecht is saved by the breaking dawn, which sends the Wilis staggering back into the trees and flowers from whence they came. As Giselle sinks into the lush flowerbed of her grave, she makes the final sacrifice, bidding Albrecht to marry Bathilde. He is devastated, but the social order is restored.

The plot may seem a bit thin to us today, but in 1841 it mattered enormously. As the historian Marian Smith has shown, fully half of the original ballet was mime, and audiences were well acquainted with its operatic and literary tropes. Conceived by Gautier, the story was inspired by Hugo's poem "Fantômes," about a young Spanish woman who dances to death, and by Heine's description of the Wilis—those "dead bacchantes"—of Slavic legend. According to critics at the time, the Wilis also recalled the ethereal women of the ballet *La Sylphide*, which had premiered at the Opera nine years earlier with the ballerina Marie Taglioni in the title role. Gautier, a well-known *Taglioniste*, was fascinated with the image of these seductive but idealized women, as chaste as they were alluring. Nor was he alone: sylphs and sylphides populated the Romantic imagination of poets and writers including Hugo, Chateaubriand, and Pierre-Jean Béranger, and could also be seen in popular theater.

Like sylphides, Wilis were all white and air. Their dancing was light and graceful, but they also had some help: in *La Sylphide*, wires "flew" Taglioni and her compatriots across the stage, and the queen of the Wilis had wires too, which helped her float up from the roses that covered the graves. Grisi herself was rigged up on an apparatus that made her appear to soar and to waltz on the branches of the trees. One critic even worried that these mechanical "toys" were taking over the dance. But these special effects notwithstanding, it was the dancing itself that made the ballet significant. The fine ensembles and the gracious poses reminded critics of Taglioni's honed and elevated style. Grisi was admired for her powerful mad scene, with its "frenetic" and "almost involuntary" dance, and for the "muscular grace" of her jumps. Indeed, *Giselle* was an enormous critical success, and it remained in the repertory of the Paris Opera on and off until 1868, when it was dropped. Versions were also staged in London, Milan, and New York in the 1840s, but these, too, would soon be forgotten.

Giselle might have become yet another forgotten dance, except that in 1842 the French ballet master Antoine Titus, then working at the Russian Imperial Theaters, was sent to Paris in search of "novelties." He came back with *Giselle*, which he staged that year in St. Petersburg. Eight years later, when Jules Perrot was ballet master in St. Petersburg, he re-staged the ballet, assisted by Marius Petipa. When Petipa became ballet master of the Imperial Theaters, he staged the ballet several times, but significant changes had occurred along the way: at some point the mechanical flights were dropped, and Petipa expanded and elaborated the Wili dance of act 2; a variation for Giselle was also added to act 2 with new music (possibly by Minkus, but we are not sure). Petipa staged the work for the last time in 1884, and a poster announcing the performance declared that he had "newly choreographed" the ballet, although he may also have drawn on his own memory of earlier productions. We just do not know.



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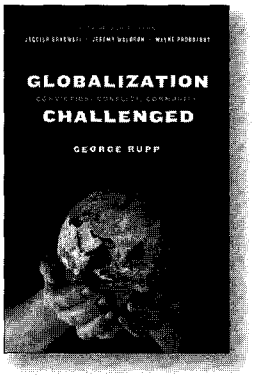

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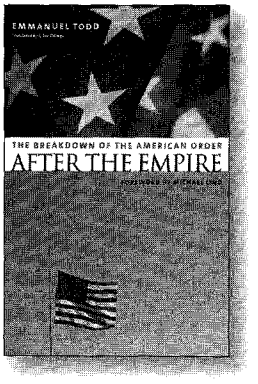

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Menérbes

The pigeons here purr. They don't coo—coo like an infant coos, or
cries, before it learns its words, or its way in the world—a string
of *whys* and *whos*: the inquisitive mind, so often confused—which
is what I was, by the birds' odd sounds—sorrowful, echoing off
the rocks behind my room. But actually, it makes sense, considering
how close they roost to that woman's house—the great artist's muse,
the weeping woman, her portraits rendered so vividly by the one who
loved and abused her. The other morning, I came home and found
a bird trapped in the house—a window left open. Not only are the pigeons'
sounds different here, their color is too: they are black, which gives them
the look of cormorants, except without the hook-like neck; or crows,
except without the thirst for meat. The panicked black bird slammed
itself against the windows, and more desperately once it sensed I was
nearby. I couldn't help thinking of that woman, driven mad in the house
he'd bought for her to suffer in—she came to mind as the hollow bones
clattered against the glass, and again, when I caught it—the bird tightened
between my palms, making the shape of a bullet, and fell silent: no purr,
no cry, no coo. I threw it into the air where it broke into a staggered flight
and landed on a rocky shelf, peering down at me with its beet-red eyes,
wet-looking and defiant; daring me to steal its plight for my art.

NATHANIEL BELLOWS

Several years later, Vladimir Stepanov, a dancer at the Imperial Theaters, began to develop a system of dance notation. He had studied anthropology and traveled to Paris to work with Jean-Martin Charcot, a pioneer of modern psychology; and in 1892 he published his system, which was quickly adopted at the Theater School in St. Petersburg. There were plans to introduce it at the Bolshoi in Moscow, but Stepanov died of tuberculosis. Among his students, however, were the future Bolshoi choreographer Alexander Gorsky and the dancer Nikolai Sergeyev. Gorsky modified Stepanov's system to make it more practical, and Sergeyev was appointed his assistant. The two of them (working with several others) set about notating Petipa's ballets: between 1892 and 1914, some twenty-four ballets were written down, among them *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker*, *La Bayadère*—and Petipa's version of *Giselle*.

How good were these notations? Not very. Most were sketchy, many were incomplete, some included only floor patterns. They were written in several different hands, and they were never published. Sergeyev and Gorsky presumably used them as *aides-mémoires*, since both men had danced or seen the ballets themselves. Sergeyev became a prominent ballet master and then director at the Maryinsky in the early years of the twentieth century, and was responsible for rehearsing many of Petipa's ballets. Known (and much reviled by the "progressive" dancers in the company) for his authoritarian style and close rapport with the czar's regime, he fled in the wake of the Revolution. Shrewdly, he loaded the notation ledgers into his trunks and took them with him. In the Soviet Union, Stepanov's notation was soon forgotten.

But *Giselle* was not: staged from memory at the Kirov Ballet in 1932 by the Soviet dancer and teacher Agrippina Vaganova, it was later mounted by Konstantin Sergeyev (no relation to Nikolai) and others. The ballet was easily adapted to meet Soviet ideological requirements. Sergeyev cut out much of the mime (considered a remnant of the pre-revolutionary world) and added bravura dancing, especially for the male lead, which he performed. His production emphasized the clash between the aristocratic rake and the innocent village girl: less true love, more class guilt. In this and other productions, *Giselle* thus became a signature Soviet ballet and a proving ground for generations of ballerinas in the USSR. Its subsequent history (including the eventual unraveling of Sergeyev's interpretation) would reflect the political and ideological battles that shaped ballet in the party-state.

Meanwhile, back in Paris and London, Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes had revived a long-moribund interest in ballet. Before the arrival of his company in 1909, ballet in Paris had given way to what the Danish choreographer August Bournonville had disdainfully called "the disgusting" can-can; in London and New York, it was little more than music hall. In 1910, however, Diaghilev brought Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinski to Paris to perform *Giselle*. In 1924, the Paris Opera Ballet reclaimed the ballet. Nikolai Sergeyev, his original notebooks in hand, staged the work with the Ukrainian dancer Serge Lifar and his Russian partner Olga Spessivtseva in the leading roles.

In 1932, Sergeyev mounted the ballet in London for the fledgling Camargo Society, a small group of dedicated artists spearheaded by Ninette de Valois, among others. De Valois, who had danced with Diaghilev's company in the 1920s, had set her mind to creating an English national ballet. A woman of backbone and sharp insight, she had seen the strong classical base supporting Diaghilev's experimental repertory and knew that without a tradition, Britain would never have a viable ballet. As she later put it, "I wanted a tradition and I set out to establish one." That same year she offered Sergeyev a ten-year contract to stage *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and later *The Sleeping Beauty* for the Vic-Wells company, which would become the Royal Ballet.

In practice, however, establishing a tradition was not so simple. Sergeyev was irascible, spoke very little English, and often depended on a retinue of Russian colleagues for help—in particular Lydia Lopokova, the Russian ballerina and wife of John Maynard Keynes, who bustled about rehearsals, calming Sergeyev, instructing the dancers, and generally trying to make peace. De Valois found Sergeyev unmusical, and she would watch in horror as he took out his large blue pencil and wiped whole passages from a score (most egregiously from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*)—passages she and her music director would later quietly restore. In several instances, he offered alternate versions of important variations. Indeed, Sergeyev often seemed to de Valois more interested in the sets and

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the costumes than in the steps, and she took to holding secret rehearsals to iron out problems in the choreography. Still, *Giselle* premiered in 1934 with Alicia Markova (Lillian Alice Marks) and Anton Dolin (Patrick Kay) in the lead roles.

Giselle was now in British hands (and bodies), its longevity assured by solid institutional backing at the Royal Ballet. Even so, the ballet continued to change: in 1960, for example, Ashton restaged *Giselle* in consultation with Karsavina. He restored mime and music, added dances, and revised the formations of the act 2 Wilis. With other subsequent revisions, it has remained in the repertory of the Royal Ballet on and off ever since.

IN NEW YORK, AS IN LONDON AND Paris, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (along with various Russian and Russian-inspired touring groups) had created both an audience and a small but energetic group of artists and producers eager to establish a native company on American soil. Not unlike their British counterparts, the Americans needed a tradition. Rudolf Orthwine, a German émigré involved in the founding of American Ballet Theater, wrote in 1937 that an American company should have a repertory with works "representative of every major period of ballet." For the Romantic period, he envisioned a production of *Giselle*.

New York audiences had seen the ballet on tour and in a production staged by the former Bolshoi dancer Mikhail Mordkin in 1937. Mordkin's version drew on the Bolshoi choreographer Alexander Gorsky's more radical (and Stanislavskian) reworking of the ballet, which the directors of the newly formed Ballet Theater eschewed: they wanted the traditional St. Petersburg version. This was partly the influence of Fokine, who had just joined Ballet Theater and whose disdain for Gorsky harked back to artistic debates in pre-revolutionary Russia. As a result, in 1940 Ballet Theater invited Dolin to stage *Giselle*, giving it an American home. Dolin was another link in the chain: he had learned the ballet from Sergeyev in London. From the outset, however, the "text" of this *Giselle* was fluid. Dolin's contract with Ballet Theater, signed in 1941, stipulated that when he danced Albrecht, the choreography must meet with his personal approval.

The *Giselle* that thereby found its way to London, Paris, and New York was certainly not the *Giselle* of Paris 1841 or even of St. Petersburg 1884. It was the product of a series of compromises hammered out between French, Russian, British, and American dancers over a period of a hundred years or so. Moreover, the changes have sometimes been substantive: plot, sets, steps, mime, and even music have been cut, pasted, and revised. *Giselle*, in sum, has never had a fixed text. Yet the ballet's loose and flexible structure has been its greatest asset. It is a classic precisely because it has changed, because it is *not* the same as it once was.

It is a classic also because it has acquired layer upon layer of symbolic meaning in the course of its history. For the French, *Giselle* was emblematic of Romanticism. For Petipa and the Russian court, it was a link to French culture. For French, British, and American dancers of the twentieth century, it was a link between the imperial tradition and the lost world of French Romantic ballet. During the Cold War, *Giselle* (especially as danced by the ballerina Galina Ulanova) became a symbol of the dramatic power of Soviet ballet, and it later served as a "bridge over" for Soviet dancers defecting to the West. Rudolf Nureyev, Natasha Makarova, and Mikhail Baryshnikov all triumphantly danced *Giselle* shortly after seeking political asylum.

Makarova's experience after her defection in 1970 shows just how flexible the ballet could be. She has said that the *Giselle* she learned at the Kirov was quite different from the one she encountered at American Ballet Theater: she mixed and matched, arriving at a compromise version. Similarly, when she later danced *Giselle* at the Royal Ballet, she complained that *their* version "abounded with sweet *paysannerie* and boring pantomime, illustrating all kinds of rubbish such as, 'It's time to wake up Mommy,' and so on." And so the ballet has continued to evolve, mending breaks in the tradition with artistic improvisation.

III.

GISELLE IS NOT AN ISOLATED case. Most ballets have similarly flexible structures and histories that are bound up with the personal biographies of the dancers who performed and staged them. In this regard, classical ballet is a very peculiar art: since it has no written texts, it is not upheld by its own past. Indeed, it has only the most limited access

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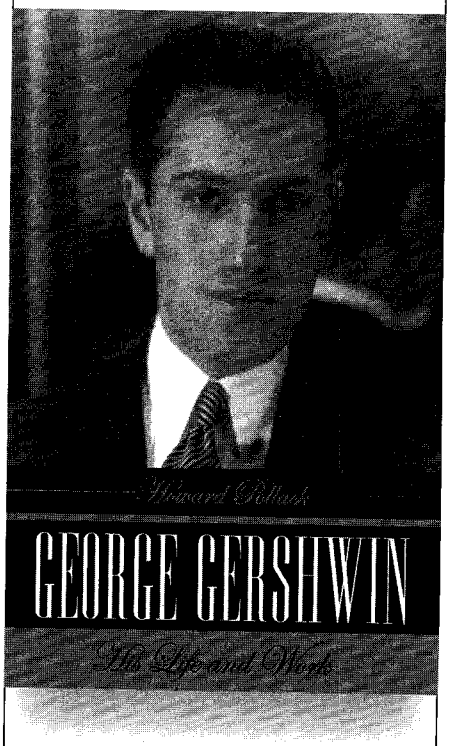

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to ages gone by, and cannot claim a body of works that recall its traditions and situate it in the history of Western civilization. Moreover, if a ballet drops out of the repertory for too long, it will disappear: we cannot retrieve it later to reconsider its merits. Fastened to the present, ballet cannot evaluate its own past. A ballet, even a "classic" ballet, is now, or it is forgotten. For this reason, ballet cannot have a canon in the way that drama and music do.

This does not mean that ballet does not have its own tradition of sacred texts. Indeed, it might be said that as a tradition ballet exists somewhere between showbiz and the priesthood. Showbiz, because ballet is constantly subject to the exigencies of getting a show up on stage and pleasing an audience. As such, it is perennially in the grip of contemporary fashion and taste: sylphides and Wilis on wires were sensational effects in the early nineteenth century, but they would look hopelessly dated today.

Yet ballet is not all innovation and change. There is in fact a powerful break built into the machinery of the tradition that slows ballet down and hooks it into the past. If we look closely, it is not *Giselle*, *La Sylphide*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Swan Lake* that matter: it is a few key dances within those works—the fairy variations, or the white swan pas de deux. And these "little" texts enunciate a school: they contain a grammar and a set of practices that constitute a tradition. Set to specific music, these dances recall the style of an era and do the work of bringing the past into the present. Most nineteenth-century ballets are built around them; if they fail, the ballet fails.

And so these variations and *enchaînements* have been passed down religiously. For nearly one hundred years, they have been a rite of passage for dancers across Europe and America. De Valois learned them; and so did Ashton, who was known to stand at the back during performances of *The Sleeping Beauty*, claiming that he was "taking a private lesson" from Petipa. Balanchine knew them, and they were standard fare at his school—and in his ballets. So, too, at the Paris Opera; and likewise for the Soviets. Today, dances made by twentieth-century masters have been added to this pedagogic repertory. It is not that the other elements—the stories, the designs, the costumes—of a ballet are unimportant. But *Giselle* is above all a dance within a story, and its style has to do with how a dancer thinks about movement and musicality.

For this reason, these "little" texts are enshrined in a kind of priesthood. They *are* sacred. Held exclusively in the bodies of the initiated, they can be learned only from a master who passes on his skills and his schooling to the next generation. The steps may change, but the process remains deeply conservative: a student must suspend critical thinking and accept the master's teachings on faith (at least for a time) in order to fully grasp the style and the detail of the art. It is these relationships—the bonds between master and student—that bridge the centuries and give ballet a foothold in the past.

When an older dancer shows a step or a variation to a younger dancer, for example, the ethics of the profession mandate strict obedience and respect: both parties rightly believe that a form of superior knowledge is passing between them. The teachings of the master are revered because of their beauty and logic, but also because they are the *only* connection the younger dancer has to the past—and she knows it.

This human chain has not been broken: this is still how ballet works today. But—and it is a big but—the twentieth-century generation that canonized the "classics" had a direct link to the nineteenth century. As artists, they were raised in its shadow, and they experienced its presence in their lives. When Balanchine choreographed *Raymonda Variations* or *The Nutcracker*, he drew on his own memories of and nostalgia for productions he had seen as a child in St. Petersburg. Yet his stagings were emphatically his own, never slavish reproductions. Ashton staged *Giselle* and *Swan Lake* so beautifully because he was at once immersed in Russian classicism and free from its orthodoxies. He adapted Petipa's Imperial style to British taste while remaining true to its forms. And even in the Soviet Union, where ideology often obscured choreography, many artists shared—and valued—their direct links to the Imperial past.

All this may no longer be the case. The current generation of dancers and choreographers faces a more difficult task. They are at least once removed from the nineteenth century; they know it only secondhand. *Their* past is Balanchine, Ashton, Tudor, and Robbins. In Russia, the problem is made more complex because many dancers are ambivalent about the Soviet legacy, and unsure about how much they want to preserve. The issues are difficult, and finding artistically rewarding solutions depends enormously on the judgment and the sensitivity of artists as they think about the history of the ballets they know.

This is just as true for more modern classics, for even this closer twentieth-century past seems strangely distant today. In spite of the presence of dancers who worked with the great masters of our time and knew their ballets firsthand, there is a sense of urgency among dancers and critics alike to preserve these ballets, along with those of the nineteenth century, as if the tradition were at risk of ebbing away. "Slippage" and "erosion" are acutely felt and much discussed today. The ubiquitous presence of reconstructors, notators, and directors rather than choreographers is further evidence of this quest for preservation—of the desire to "hold on" or to recapture a fragile and fast-receding past. The current prestige of the nineteenth- and twentieth- century classics may owe much to this vague but powerful sense of loss.

As we hold on, however, we should remember that ballets have a short half-life. The classics do not reach back very far, and many twentieth-century works are already forgotten or irrevocably altered. This is not necessarily to be regretted, for ballet's strongest connection to the past lies in the close attention to technique and style, and to the flexible and improvisatory character of its tradition—not in the mere fact of reproducing the works of former times. In this sense, the canon is illusory. The tradition is sustained more by its practices than by its works. Dancers stand on the shoulders of dancers, and ballets are not passed on, they are "begat." ■

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Andrew J. Nathan

The Bloody Enigma

MAO'S LAST REVOLUTION
By Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals
(Harvard University Press, 693 pp., $35)

I.

THIS YEAR MARKS THE fortieth anniversary of the start of China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. According to a later Chinese Communist Party official, one hundred million people were killed, driven to suicide, beaten, convicted in "unjust, false, and erroneous cases," "sent down," or otherwise affected by what Chinese now call the "ten-year catastrophe." Yet the anniversary was greeted by silence in China and abroad. At home, people are not allowed to commemorate Mao's horrors, because the current leaders sustain their regime through the same internal secrecy and arbitrary repression that made the Cultural Revolution possible. Abroad, people think that China has changed so much that its old tragedies are no longer relevant. Besides, it is not polite to remind our trading partners of events that they wish to forget.

And so Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals have performed a great service in providing a masterful history of this important—and puzzling—event. In an earlier series titled *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, (the first volume was published by Columbia University Press in 1974, the second in 1983, and the third in 1997), MacFarquhar described the history of Chinese high politics from 1956, when Mao began to doubt the revolutionary potential of the Soviet model, to the eve of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, when he began to try to root revisionism out of China. These books were based on skillful Pekingological analyses of official Chinese statements and propaganda. That evidence was supplemented in the later volumes by information from memoirs, official chronologies, and documentary collections that the Chinese started to publish after Mao's death in 1976.

The new book draws on still richer sources. The party has published thirteen volumes of Mao's post-1949 papers, a two-volume authorized biography, and a chronology of the life of Zhou Enlai, Mao's prime minister and chief enabler. Mao's secretaries, aides, servants, guards, and family members have issued memoirs that contain revealing information even though they were vetted by the propaganda department. Overseas and free of party censorship, Mao's personal physician, the late Li Zhisui, wrote a book about his years with the dictator called *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (I must disclose that I wrote the preface), and Gao Wenqian, an émigré party archivist, detailed Mao's mistreatment of Zhou Enlai in a book on Zhou's late years. And MacFarquhar's co-author, Michael Schoenhals, has haunted Chinese bookstands and flea markets to find many precious original documents—manuscript diaries, privately published memoirs, Red Guard handbills, intra-party investigation reports, handwritten confessions, personal notes of meetings and speeches, and original mimeographs of party documents. (Ethnic Chinese scholars from abroad have been detained on state secrets charges for purchasing such materials.) Both authors have conducted interviews with party historians and the Cultural Revolution's victims.

Before his academic career, MacFarquhar served as an international political reporter for the BBC and as a member of the British Parliament. His writing displays a fine sense of high politics. Schoenhals is a longtime student of Chinese language and rhetoric. Together they are exquisitely alive to the signals sent by nuances of timing, the editing of photographs, invitations to and exclusions from meetings, and small changes in formulaic utterances. They have created an unforgettable account of exceedingly traumatic events.

THE NARRATIVE CAN BE PAINfully vivid at the level of ordinary factory workers, students, intellectuals, and party members—the "masses," in party-speak—who were both actors in and audiences for a public drama whose logic they seldom understood. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals bring to life the self-righteous anger of the Red Guards and the worker rebels, the suffering of their victims, the daily rituals of the Mao cult, the efforts of ordinary people to make sense out of what was happening and to bend their minds to believe in it. They quote from a series of three handwritten confessions by an interrogation victim who had to keep changing her story until she could satisfy her questioners that she had participated in a particular plot, even though she knew nothing about it. (In fact, the plot never existed.) Such stories rescue us from regarding the Cultural Revolution as something past and canned. They portray real people in real time who did not know what was going to happen next. One sees chillingly how a totalitarian regime traps people. Schoolteachers or factory managers got up in the morning and went to work knowing that they were going to be tortured and maybe killed, but they had no place to hide and nowhere to go. The torturers were trapped, too. Activism was a narrowing chute that led from speaking to shouting to beating, from which there was no exit unless one was willing to take one's place among the victims. There was an alternative, though. It was suicide. Targets killed themselves not only to escape torture, but often to send a signal of protest. In return, the regime treated suicide as an admission of guilt and punished the victim's survivors.

Some parts of the narrative are less successful. The authors have to cram so much incident into some passages that the story becomes abstract and unreal: a series of mass movements that they describe in a chapter aptly titled "Confusion Nationwide," a seemingly meaningless wave of officially sponsored violence called "cleansing the class ranks," or the endless purges of officials at the party center who were not particularly close to the Cultural Revolution's main targets. Sometimes MacFarquhar and Schoenhals use extreme examples to stand in for a plethora of strange events, so that the story seems surreal rather than something that real people did. They present incomplete and rounded—indeed, probably fictional—numbers from their sources, saying, to give a few examples, that during the cleansing-the-

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class-ranks campaign in a particular province, 22,900 people died and 120,000 were maimed; that in a particular place "33 different forms and 290 variants" of torture were used; and that in the final investigation of Liu Shaoqi, 400,000 people were assigned to go through four million files. These numbers do not seem real, and they have a numbing effect. I suppose such narrative strategies are unavoidable, given the nature of the sources and the complexity of the story.

The first two-thirds of the book describes the years between 1965 and 1969, which might be called the Cultural revolution proper. This is the period of party "work teams" sent to "rectify" college campuses, Red Guards "smashing the four olds" (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits of the exploiting classes), worker "rebels" "seizing power" in factories, Mao's mobilization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to suppress factional fighting, his "sending down" of the Red Guards to labor with the peasants, his purge of second-in-command and head of state Liu Shaoqi and other leaders, the paralysis of the party apparatus and government bureaucracies, the establishment of army-dominated "revolutionary committees" to take over the running of the country, and society-wide persecutions against imaginary enemies. This period ended with the Ninth Party Congress of April 1969, at which the Cultural Revolution was declared victorious and the leader of the military, Lin Biao, was designated as Mao's "best student, comrade-in-arms, and chosen successor." The master arc of this part of the story is a coup by Mao against the party: he calls up the masses to purge the leadership, then uses the army to demobilize the masses and puts his most loyal follower in the number two position.

The second part of the book uses half as much space to cover twice as much time, from the party congress in 1969 to Mao's death in September 1976, which is considered the official end-date of the Cultural Revolution. These pages devote less attention to events in society and more to events at Mao's court. Here the story becomes even more bizarre. Mao purges Lin Biao, rehabilitates and then re-purges Deng Xiaoping, denies Zhou Enlai treatment for a fatal cancer, empowers his wife Jiang Qing and three radical colleagues to launch a series of oblique political campaigns against other leaders, and designates an ill-qualified new successor, Hua Guofeng, whose rule was to last only a couple of years past Mao's death. The main story line of this part of the book reverses that of the first part. Mao undoes the involvement of the military in politics, gets rid of his newly designated successor, unravels his purges of some party leaders to reinstate civilian rule, and pushes his personality cult and ideology over the edge of self-parody into destruction. This was, as the authors put it, "an ending [of the Cultural Revolution] so painfully drawn out, so tortuously slow, that it would last more than twice as long as the event it supposedly brought to a close."

II.

WHY DID MAO DO IT? This has always been the master puzzle of the Cultural Revolution. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals do not formulate an overall answer, but two lines of interpretation emerge from their narrative. Neither of their arguments fully makes sense, and taken together they even leave the authors themselves dissatisfied.

MacFarquhar and Schoenhals suggest, for a start, that Mao was motivated by revolutionary ideals. Thus, after asking, "Why did China's supreme leader decide to tear down what he had done so much to create?," they answer by describing Mao's theory of revisionism. This theory had its source in Mao's disappointment with the Soviet experiment, which he believed had created a privileged bureaucratic class that abandoned revolutionary ideals. To prevent the same thing happening in China, he set out to "smash the old culture," "weed out capitalist roaders in the Party," and create a "new socialist man." Elsewhere the authors say that "the Cultural Revolution had always been about the rearing of revolutionary successors," and that Mao sought to "temper" his successors in the "surging waves" of the mass movement because he believed that human nature could be remolded through struggle. The masses, he believed, "had to liberate themselves."

The irony of this theory has been clear ever since Li Zhisui, in his memoir of his life as Mao's personal physician, exposed the self-indulgent way Mao lived: his multiple villas, private trains, and serial mistresses; his personal cruelty to everyone around him; and his lack of interest in the suffering of the masses. Mao was given to apparently jocular but genuinely chilling remarks such as that China would do fine even if two-thirds of its population died in a nuclear war, and that the universe would survive even if the Earth were destroyed. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals do not cite these dicta, but they report him as saying: "This man Hitler was even more ferocious. The more ferocious the better, don't you think?" And this: "Beijing is too civilized! I would say there is not a great deal of disorder ... and that the number of hooligans is very small. Now is not the time to interfere." At one happy private occasion, Mao offered this toast: "To the unfolding of nationwide all-round civil war!"

CLEARLY, MAO WAS A HYPOCRITE in his personal life and a terrorist-from-above in his politics. But none of this proves that he did not believe what he said about "continuous revolution." If Mao was serious about his vision, however, why did he make such a hash of it? Even his closest colleagues found his demands vague, contradictory, and changing. First he endorsed the takeover of power in Shanghai by the workers, then he changed his mind and lodged what MacFarquhar and Schoenhals call a series of "absurd quibbles" as a way of ordering a reversal. First he ordered local military units to "support the left," then he ordered officers to undertake self-criticism for doing so. First he encouraged the leftist acolytes Wang Li, Guan Feng, and Qi Benyu to promote "dragging out a small handful in the military," then he ordered their arrest for being too radical. Over and over MacFarquhar and Schoenhals show that no one understood what Mao wanted. "After the session, the minister of education ... said to his colleagues, 'Now I am very confused.' " "Amazingly, it would seem as if the identity of the person or persons 'like Khrushchev' to whom the Chairman was alluding escaped even members of Mao's inner circle." "The participants [in the central work conference] had no idea what accorded with or violated Mao's grand design." "Misperceptions of Mao's attitude, induced by his contradictory behavior, quite probably helped to precipitate the February Countercurrent."

Still less could young students, workers, and cadres imbibe any reliable

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message from Mao's cryptic words and contradictory actions. Those who committed themselves most strongly to the "ism" attached to Mao's name—people such as the philosophy professor Nie Yuanzi, the Red Guard leader Kuai Dafu, and the ideologist Chen Boda—ended up in the countryside learning from the peasants, or in prison. The eventual result after Mao's death was a society more cynically materialistic than perhaps any other on earth.

MacFarquhar and Schoenhals's second line of interpretation is that Mao launched the Cultural Revolution as a form of power struggle, to bring down his rivals within the party. They quote him as saying, "Of all the important things, the possession of power is the most important." After discussing Mao's concern with revisionism, they segue into his antipathy for Liu Shaoqi, the number-two in the leadership, who, unlike the pliant Zhou Enlai, "had no intention of abandoning his critical faculties" when responding to Mao's directives. In this view of the Cultural Revolution, Mao saw plots all around him. When his senior colleagues took over policy-making after the failure of the Great Leap Forward, he decided to take power back. He targeted officials in the cultural sphere first because they were less important, and used that stratagem to draw out their more powerful patrons. As he changed the party line, more and more cadres flunked the loyalty test, enabling him to widen the purge.

Only Zhou Enlai managed to tack and turn to stay consistently close to the helmsman, so Mao spared Zhou and used him to run the country. (Such was Zhou's agility that he suddenly upgraded the protocol status of a purged leader's funeral when Mao jumped out of bed in his pajamas to attend it, ordered an airplane in which other officials were traveling to circle so he could get his own plane on the ground first and be there to welcome them, and reversed the flow of the annual National Day parade so it would go toward instead of away from the symbolically revolutionary direction of east. And such was his sangfroid that he opined, "If someone is already dead, then you should not go too far in your attempts to determine [who was responsible].") Mao held Deng Xiaoping in reserve in a factory job to back up Zhou, according to MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, because Mao unaccountably viewed Deng as less dangerous than other senior cadres. Even so, Mao constantly had doubts about everyone: Zhou and Deng, his ghostwriter Chen Boda, his wife Jiang Qing, and his final mistress Zhang Yufeng. To the end of his life he never found a leadership team, a wife, a lover, or a child whom he could trust.

But the theory of the Cultural Revolution as a power struggle also does not adequately explain Mao's actions. Why not just sack Liu Shaoqi, as Mao had done with so many rivals in so many previous party "line struggles"—arrange to have him voted out of office, accuse him of some political crime, or call a meeting and arrest him when he showed up, in the efficient manner in which Mao's successors dealt with his wife and her colleagues, the so-called Gang of Four, after his death? Instead Mao entrapped Liu in an irresoluble policy conundrum

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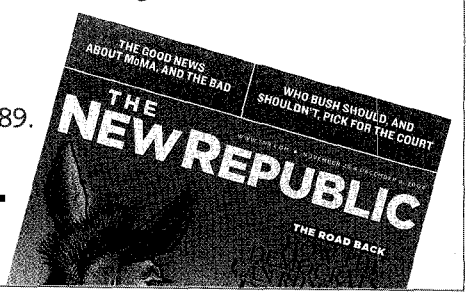

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so as to humiliate him; laboriously disempowered him through a costly, tumultuous mass movement; picked away at his network of supporters; and finally dispatched him to a long, lonely, cold, and miserable death. The purge dragged on for nearly two years and required the mobilization of tens of millions of people, causing grievous damage to the economy, the party, and, in the long run, to Mao's own reputation. Liu's death took another two years.

Or consider the case of Lin Biao. As MacFarquhar and Schoenhals point out, "Had the Cultural Revolution been simply a power struggle, Mao could have ended it in early 1967," after the fall of Liu Shaoqi. Why purge the ultra-loyal Lin, who had no ideas of his own and wanted nothing more than to preserve unanimity with Mao at all times? (Lin's position was that "we must firmly implement the Chairman's instructions, whether we understand them or not.") MacFarquhar and Schoenhals observe that Mao's "motivations are still obscure." And if Lin had to go, why not just fire him, or have him arrested and charged with some false crime? Why entrap him in an obscure debate over China's need or lack of need for a head of state, and engage in a year-long, semi-public campaign to undermine his power in the military and his reputation, to the point where Lin decided to flee the country and died in a plane crash—a messy procedure that again cost the country by delaying its economic recovery and cost Mao himself heavily in the minds of the public? In short, as MacFarquhar and Schoenhals quote one cadre as saying, "If what the chairman resents is that there are too many cadres, why not simply tell those eligible for retirement to retire? Why go about it in this way?"

TO SOME EXTENT, MACFARQUHAR and Schoenhals could have made these puzzles less puzzling by more clearly explaining the structure of power in the Mao era. Nobody understands it better than they do. Among many nuggets of new discovery in their book, they explain how Mao got information about events on the ground, how Red Guard rallies were planned, how the Cultural Revolution Small Group displaced the Politburo as a decision-making body, how the Red Guard linkups around the country triggered a meningitis epidemic, how the Central Case Examination Group managed the investigations of top officials, how delegates were chosen to attend the Ninth Party Congress, and in what form Mao received letters from the masses. All these details are useful for anyone trying to understand the political milieu in which Mao and his enemies operated.

But some larger points about the power structure would have helped readers to make more sense of Mao's goals and strategies. Mao had been forced to cede most of the levers of power in the Chinese party-state after the failure of the Great Leap Forward. As of 1965, he did not control career promotions in the party, the government, or the economic units. He did not control the propaganda apparatus, which was the chief means of communication between the central authorities and the population and local officials, because internal means of communication in the bureaucracy were so ineffective. (Even high-ranking local officials had to guess which way the wind was blowing by analyzing what was said in the party-controlled mass media.) Nor did Mao control the making or implementing of policy in economics, education, or other key areas—with the significant exception of foreign policy.

By all appearances, Mao in 1965 was a safely stowed figurehead who could be brought out on occasion as a symbol by other leaders advancing their own agendas. But he was not satisfied with that role, and he retained two instruments for clawing his way back to supremacy. The first was the cult of personality. His colleagues had wavered over whether to allow it to exist, but over time they built it up as a tool for mobilizing the backward peasant society that they were trying to modernize. If Mao found a way to get access to the propaganda media, he could use his cult to go over the heads of the other leaders to appeal directly to the masses. Once he broke out of the communication blockade, no one could contradict his interpretation of his own ideology. Then he could use the masses as a source of power, a technique that the Chinese Communist Party had wielded against the Japanese and Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, but which had not been used before in internal party power struggles.

Mao's second resource was power over key elements of the military. Neither Mao nor anyone else firmly controlled the military nationwide, owing to unclear lines of command and inefficient communications. But as MacFarquhar and Schoenhals point out, Mao had ultimate authority over the armed forces as chairman of the Party Military Affairs Commission. Early in the Cultural Revolution he took special care to strengthen both the Beijing Garrison Command and the palace guard that surrounded all the leaders at home and at work in Zhongnanhai, and to consolidate his direct control over these units.

The story of how Mao did this is complicated. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals provide all the details, but they do not do enough to explain what the details mean. Mao did not rely on the loyalty of any one chain of command. He developed multiple formal and informal lines of control over the armed forces nationwide and locally, so that the threads came together only in his hands. As a result, when Mao closed the political trap on Liu Shaoqi, Liu was as paralyzed as any middle school teacher in the face of the Red Guards, because he was physically surrounded by Mao's men. When some of the most senior leaders of the party and the army got together to attack the conduct of the Cultural Revolution in the so-called February Countercurrent of 1967, Mao was able to order them into a series of self-criticism meetings with no hope of uniting their extensive party and army networks against him. Even the head of the army, Lin Biao, had no way to defend himself when Mao decided to go after him, and ended up fleeing the country in an unsuccessful attempt to save his life.

THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE power structure goes some way to show how the two theories of ideological vision and power struggle fit together to explain some aspects of Mao's behavior. If he had to clear the established party leaders out of the way to make the revolution continue, then he needed to use the masses to topple them, and he wanted

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to do it in the messiest way possible in order to temper the revolutionary successors in the storms of struggle. After this he needed the army to demobilize the masses, and then he had to decapitate the army to push it back to the barracks so he could return selected old cadres who had undergone tempering to their jobs on probation. In this strategy, Mao moved from impaired power to absolute power, using the process to put the party and the people through an exercise designed to change their views of the world.

This combined vision-and-power-struggle story line was pretty much Mao's own account of what he was doing, and it is pretty much the account that settles out of MacFarquhar and Schoenhals's narrative. Yet this theory gives Mao more credit for having coherent goals and strategies than MacFarquhar and Schoenhals themselves think he deserves. Describing Mao as opaque, deceptive, and contradictory, they point out frequently throughout the book that there is no way to know why he did many of the things that he did. His "behavior remains a puzzle"; "It is not clear what or whom Mao had in mind"; "Mao's [behavior was] contradictory."

So little of what Mao said and did makes cool political sense that one is tempted to fall back on a third theory: that he was insane. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals also employ this explanation some of the time, describing Mao as perhaps paranoid, and as fantasizing during the Cultural Revolution in the way that he did during the Great Leap Forward. (MacFarquhar co-edited *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, published in 1989, which contain extensive transcripts of some of Mao's nuttiest ravings from the Leap period.) And Mao is not the only crazy person in this story. Lin Biao was "a small, thin, weak man, his face as white as paper," who "normally led a mole-like existence in his home." Jiang Qing's "paranoia left her constantly on guard." The ghostwriter Chen Boda and the internal intelligence chief Kang Sheng were also pretty strange. And eventually the regime as a whole acted deranged—as seen, for example, in Central Document Number 3 of 1970, issued after the entire nation had been beaten into submission, which ordered officials "resolutely [to] execute those counterrevolutionary elements who are swollen with arrogance after having committed countless heinous crimes and against whom popular indignation is so great that nothing save execution will serve to calm it."

Certainly Mao was extraordinarily cruel. But neither MacFarquhar and Schoenhals nor any other scholar has yet presented a plausible diagnosis that would help us to understand how Mao's pathology directed his actions. Confronting such riddles, one misses a certainty, a fullness of reconstruction, that simply cannot be had when it comes to Mao and his court, because so much remains off-limits even in the recent document collections, biographies, and memoirs. Li Zhisui, who was perhaps the only person really close to Mao who was able to write uncensored, was too limited in his access to the leader—and, indeed, too frightened of him—to provide an answer to the inner mysteries of this supremely mysterious man. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday solved this problem in their best-seller *Mao: The Unknown Story* with their own imaginations—by making up motives and states of mind that they ascribed to Mao and other actors without authority from their sources. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals have respected the limits of their data, and have more scrupulously left Mao an enigma.

As soon as Mao was gone, his project was abandoned. China set course toward wherever one thinks it is heading: capitalism, market socialism, export-led mercantilism—certainly toward a society obsessed with selfish wealth. Deng Xiaoping set to work to make another Cultural Revolution impossible. He created a retirement system for party elders to leave power before they died without retaining the right to intervene in politics (as Deng himself ironically had to do in 1989 against his own wishes), strengthened the role of formal institutions in making decisions and choosing leaders, and established the deliberative technocratic promotion system that produced the current set of organization-man leaders. Deng delivered a formal verdict on Mao in 1981, in a party resolution that evaluated Mao as 70 percent good and 30 percent bad. Interestingly, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals have discovered that this ratio was originally proposed in 1975 by Mao himself in one of his displays of false modesty, making it a safe formula for the canny Deng to adopt.

Still, readers of MacFarquhar and Schoenhals's doleful history should not comfort themselves with the thought that Mao's failure taught the Chinese once and for all that human nature cannot be changed, or that all people want freedom, or that capitalism and democracy are the tide of history. In this sense, I do not agree with the authors that the Cultural Revolution was "the last stand of Chinese conservatism," by which they mean the last attempt to define a distinctive Chinese form of modernity that uses Western technology to realize a Chinese essence. Hard as it is to believe after reading this masterful and sickening book, large parts of Mao's vision still live. The dominant voices among independent intellectuals in China today belong not to liberal democrats and human rights activists, but to so-called neoconservatives and neo-leftists who believe that even though Mao's revolution failed (through a combination of his mistakes and Western cultural and economic subversion), the search for a distinctive Chinese model should continue. Some of these ideas even animate the current leadership's push for a so-called "harmonious society," which aims to use state control to repress social conflict and ease inequality. The Cultural Revolution was Mao's last revolution, but it may not have been China's. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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serious lapse in the collection's ethical responsibilities. Either way, as this year's scandals at the Getty and the Met also suggest, it's high time that we retire the bromide that "native" countries are corrupt and care little about their past and that Western countries and their museums care more about culture than the "native" countries that produced it. Whenever laws or agreements are broken in the name of art or science, the moral high ground is lost, which in turn makes it harder and harder for Western scientists and museum curators to work in other countries without facing similar accusations. For that reason alone—as much as to clear Yale's historical conscience—the Machu Picchu artifacts should be returned.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Troops and Us

LAST MONTH, AT A GRUBBY ITALIAN restaurant near a military base in North Carolina, I had dinner with a senior Army officer I had met in Iraq. We drank, talked about the war, and, on the television above the bar, we watched the fall of Washington. The dueling commentators on the TV screen were saying that the upcoming elections would doom the U.S. enterprise in Iraq. They were sure of themselves: This was unquestionably a Tet moment. Or was it Waterloo? What they were bellowing about was my dinner companion's war—in which he'd presided over entire cities, commanded thousands of soldiers, and, too often, lifted their remains onto helicopters. But he seemed more intrigued by his shrimp scampi. "The place they're talking about," he explained between bites, "I don't even recognize it."

I KNEW WHAT WOULD COME NEXT, AND it did: his charge that the press purposefully discounts the good news from Iraq. We argued the point, my impression being that, rather than bad news, a typical day relays hardly any news at all. Between segments about blood-pressure pills, the network newscasts offer brisk and requisite mention of the day's war dead. But the minutes they devote to the war each month amount to roughly half the coverage broadcast during Vietnam. Meanwhile, despite having generated essential and vivid war reporting, newspapers have been quietly scaling back or shuttering their Baghdad bureaus. The number of embedded journalists covering military operations in Iraq has declined from over 700 in 2003 to just eleven today. All of which leaves readers to color with their imaginations those boxes in the newspapers that tally the casualty rolls. Or, worse, to let Frank Rich or Rush Limbaugh or a *pisher* with a website do the coloring for them.

WHAT IF THEY THREW A WAR AND nobody came? Well, they did, and few opinion-makers have. For most, Iraq amounts to little more than a Rorschach test—Bush's criminal folly or, less commonly these days, a proving ground for American resolve. Iraq is something to be poll-tested, quantified, imagined. If only the Army would deploy this brigade here and that brigade there, a leading purveyor of bullshit recently instructed his readers, despite his acquaintance with neither here nor there. Critics of Lars Von Trier, the Danish filmmaker and self-proclaimed chronicler of America's ills, point out that one of the reasons he gets the United States so wrong may be the fact that he never bothered to visit the place. Well, *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert, who nearly every week purports to describe some facet of the war, weighed in earlier this year by describing a TV show he watched about Iraq. *National Review*'s John Derbyshire, meanwhile, advertises his incuriosity about the war on which he opines as if it were a virtue. "While perfectly happy to go have a look at Iraq," the columnist assures us, "I am ... under no illusion that I shall be much the wiser for it."

BUT 7,000 MILES DOESN'T BEGIN TO measure the distance between Iraq the abstraction and Iraq the place. The moment one passes through Iraq's looking glass, all the predetermined conclusions, all the political certainties, all the things that Iraq has come to embody in the American imagination—all of them crumble away. They cannot withstand even the smallest details, which by themselves reveal the most telling truths: the difference between the Iraqi side of the Baghdad airport, which decays by the hour, and the American side, which operates with industrial efficiency; the small-arms fire of a few months earlier tapering off in one Iraqi town but picking up in another; the stench of burning trash and rubber that makes the country even smell like a car wreck. Bearded fanatics populate Iraq the abstraction, but Iraq the place consists mostly of terrified women and children. For the sake of American soldiers who know this, who speak with a sense of ownership about their war and see themselves as a progressive force on the Iraqi landscape—and who, according to surveys by the *Military Times* and the Pew Research Center, hold opinions on the war that run almost exactly counter to those registered at home—be grateful that the machinery of war overwhelms the din from Washington.

THE LATEST CONTRIBUTION TO THAT DIN comes from a chorus of war supporters who wish to apologize—or, more truthfully, demand an apology—for not getting the war they were promised. Unlike Robert McNamara, this war's apologists can't afford to wait decades to go public. After all, there are campaigns to be run, op-eds to be placed, insights to be vindicated. Is it really necessary to point out that these apologies contain not a hint of genuine remorse and more than a hint of self-serving purpose? Or that a sincere apology would be delivered not in the pages of *Vanity Fair*, but directly to the ones who have been harmed—the American soldiers and Iraqis? (Not that either much cares whether a pundit thinks they bleed for nothing and, by the way, really feels their pain.) Like President Clinton's serial apologies for every historical wrong committed in America's name, the whole point of the exercise is to move forward. Having said, "Sorry about that," the ranks of the ostentatiously contrite imply, historical blunders need no longer detain us—or them. The problem is, history still detains 150,000 Americans in Iraq.

THE OBSERVATION THAT AMERICAN soldiers inhabit a different world from the Iraqis around them has become a numbing cliché, but it is their remove from their own society that ought to unnerve us. Not so much the demographic lottery that plants one 20-year-old in an infantry platoon and another in a Washington internship—the more striking divide is one of ethos and temperament. In Iraq, the U.S. mission requires sacrifice and killing. At home, the U.S. mission requires easy certainties and narrative simplicity. The dissonance makes it nearly impossible to convey one to the other. None of this is to endorse the cliché of the American soldier as the custodian of everything decent and virtuous about the United States (an analysis with which the military tends, worrisomely, to concur). But something has to give. And when the two worlds finally do collide—when the soldiers arrive home along with a reckoning for a lost war—many things will. The distance between us and them won't be one of those things.

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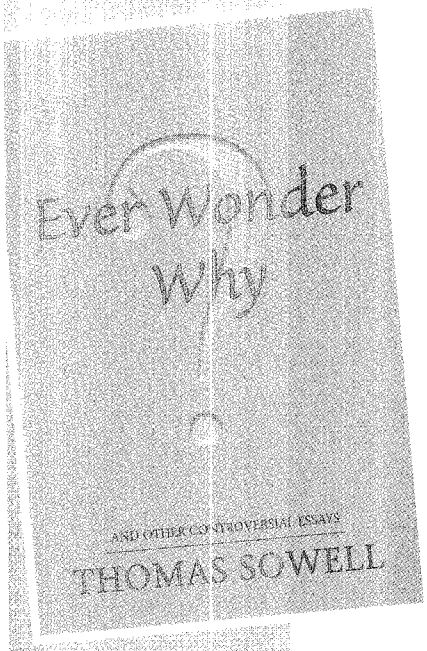

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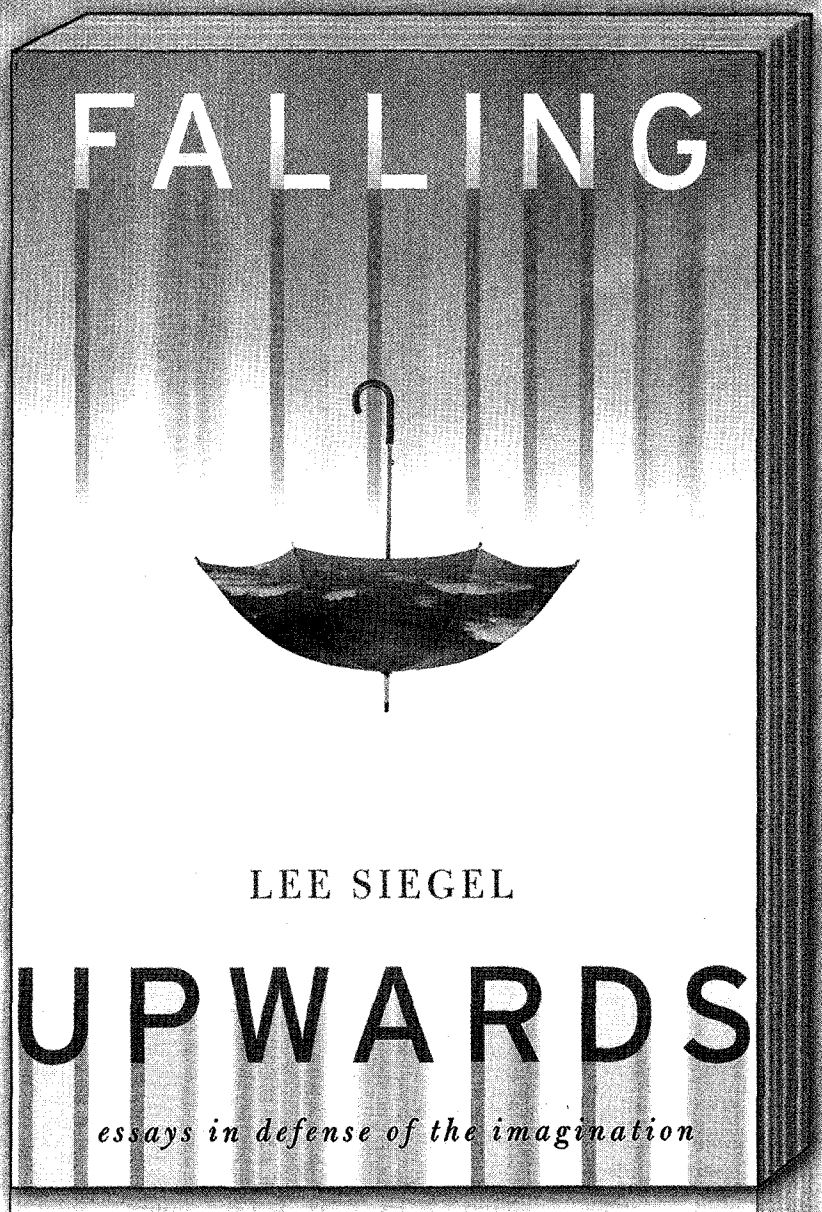

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Iraq: What Next?

Even George W. Bush concedes that the United States needs a new policy in Iraq. In this issue, strategists, historians, policymakers, political theorists, and journalists of varying ideological stripes offer their versions of a new course. While few of the contributors agree on prescriptions, they fall into two broad camps when assessing Iraq's future: grim and grimmer.

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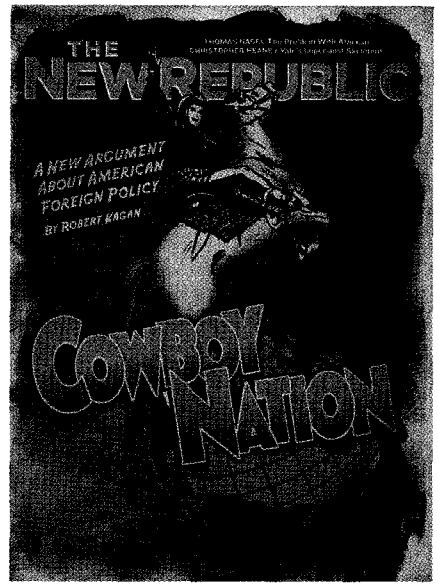
CORRESPONDENCE

JUNGLE BUNGLE

As a great-grandson of Hiram Bingham, my natural inclination is to defend his record and the right of Yale University to hold onto their legally obtained excavations. Christopher Heaney, however, does a nearly perfect job of causing me to see both sides of the repatriation issue ("Bonesmen," October 23). Heaney paints a fair portrait of a man with both considerable accomplishments (pioneering university recognition of Latin American studies and rediscovering Machu Picchu) and conflicted ambitions (respecting Peruvian sovereignty early in his career then submitting to Teddy Roosevelt's updated Monroe Doctrine later in his career). Nevertheless, Heaney misses one crucial issue. In my own travels to Machu Picchu and the Cuzco region, I was surprised to hear locals express to me their appreciation for Yale's role in protecting their *own* artifacts. Many Cuzco residents, especially those who identified more as Quechan (the local indigenous culture) than Peruvian, told me they were saddened by how frequently much of what had been left behind had been looted, both inside and outside of official Peruvian museums. Perhaps the anti-Yale, anti-American manipulation of this issue by former President Toledo and both candidates in the recent presidential election isn't an attitude as widely held as the politicians would have you believe. Not only have many members of my family—who, like me, do not mention our relation to Bingham—heard this appreciation for the role Yale has played since 1911, but many other travelers to the region have shared with me similar accounts of local opinion. While this evidence is certainly anecdotal and perhaps biased (a potential tip to a guide or a restaurateur might be as strong an incentive as any for pro-Bingham/Yale remarks), I do believe there is an extralegal case to be made that Yale has earned the right to share the artifacts with the country of their origin. No doubt this issue has been raised by the Met with regard to the Euphronios Krater or the J. Paul Getty Museum and St. Louis Art Museum in their own disputes. But, in the case of Bingham, Yale, and Peru, given the history of Peruvian



neglect, doesn't protection of the artifacts for the better part of a century merit consideration in the final resolution? Perhaps I am succumbing to the very same "exceptionalism" that my great-grandfather embodied when he brought the antiquities to the United States in the first place. Unlike him, I do not have the benefit of the spirit of the times. Quite the contrary, given recent similar disputes, I have no doubt Peru will win back their treasures. But some consideration must be given to the positive role Yale and Bingham have played in preserving the actual artifacts and inspiring respect for Incan civilization worldwide.

RICHARD BLAND
Washington, D.C.

CHRISTOPHER HEANEY RESPONDS: I don't think Yale is in any danger—nor should it be—of losing full credit for the positive role it played in the revelation and excavation of Machu Picchu. Likewise, many Peruvians are able to see the complexity of what Bingham did in his university's name. But Yale's Peabody Museum should not be judged solely on the Machu Picchu collection. An examination of the curation of Bingham's larger Peruvian collection, in fact, suggests that we should reconsider our assumption that artifacts are always better off in a U.S., or Western, museum. For example—Yale's repeated refusal to honor its agreement to return the Machu Picchu artifacts aside—the Peabody claimed it had honored an agreement to return artifacts excavated from other Incan sites in 1914–1915. My article pointed out that the university's online catalogue in fact listed artifacts from a number of sites—including the last capital of the Incas—that Yale excavated from that period and that, therefore, should have been returned. Apparently, that was too much scrutiny of the Peabody's Peruvian collection. The weekend before "Bonesmen" hit newsstands, the Peabody removed those artifacts from its online catalogue. Yale's public affairs officer claims they were removed in the process of reviewing the Peabody's problematic catalogue. In all scenarios, this suggests that Yale's curation of its Peruvian collection is deeply flawed. In a best-case scenario—in which we take Yale's word at face value—its inventory of the Peruvian collection claimed thousands of artifacts that hadn't been at the Peabody for over 80 years, which hardly seems like responsible museum management. And, in a worst-case scenario, the inventory was right, the artifacts are still at Yale, and the museum's removal of their presence online—which happened once before, with the Machu Picchu artifacts—is an attempt to cover up a

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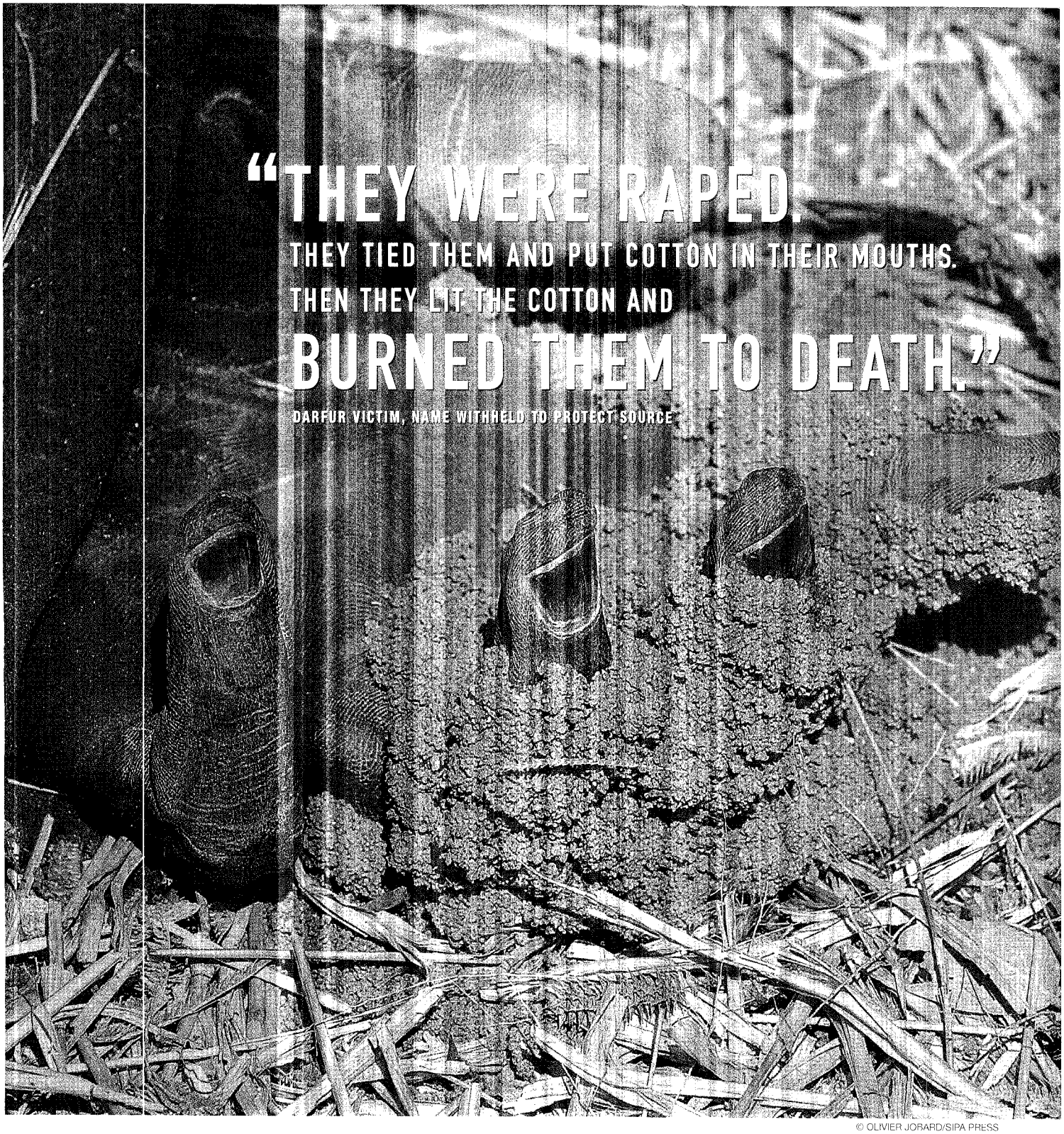
"THEY WERE RAPED.
THEY TIED THEM AND PUT COTTON IN THEIR MOUTHS.
THEN THEY LIT THE COTTON AND
BURNED THEM TO DEATH."
DARFUR VICTIM, NAME WITHHELD TO PROTECT SOURCE

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To the Brink

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE IRAQ ANYmore. It exceeds my capacity to visualize horror. In a recent interview with *The Washington Post*'s Anthony Shadid, a woman named Fatima put it this way: "One-third of us are dying, one-third of us are fleeing, and one-third of us will be widows." At the Baghdad morgue, they distinguish Shia from Sunnis because the former are beheaded and the latter are killed with power drills. Moqtada Al Sadr has actually grown afraid of his own men. I came of age believing the United States had a mission to stop such evil. And now, not only isn't the United States stopping it—in some important sense, we are its cause.

In a particularly cruel twist, the events of recent months have demolished the best arguments both for staying and for leaving. Once upon a time, you could have plausibly argued that, by staying, the United States might make things better: We could have improved security on the ground and thus enhanced the Iraqi government's authority while weakening the insurgents and the militias. That would have allowed Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish leaders to make the tough political compromises that might have pulled Iraq back from the brink. But, since February's attack on the Golden Mosque in Samarra, the violence has grown so shocking—and the sectarian hatred so intense—that asking either the Sunnis or Shia to disarm (no one is even asking the Kurds) is inviting them to commit mass suicide. The Bush administration keeps telling Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki to take on the Shia militias, as if the guy just lacks motivation. But the militias are not a threat to the Iraqi state; they *are* the Iraqi state. By their grace, Maliki stays in office and remains alive.

Once upon a time, you also could have argued that, if the United States left, Iraqis would have little reason to continue the slaughter. "What the resistance movement has been resisting is the occupation," wrote Nir Rosen last December in *The Atlantic*, making the case for withdrawal. "Who would the insurgents fight if the enemy left?" The question now answers itself. For most Iraqi Sunnis, the primary enemy is no longer the U.S. military; it's their Shia countrymen. Amazingly (given how much they hate our occupation), prominent Sunni leaders now actually want the United States to stay—because we're restraining the government in Baghdad from butchering them wholesale.

Today, the honest arguments for staying or leaving are simply that we can't do the opposite. We can't leave because the prospects of a regional civil war (and, perhaps, a jihadist safe haven) are so horrifying. And we can't stay because our presence can't prevent those things—so why send young Americans to die trying to stop the inevitable?

At this late date, the United States has only one card left to play in Iraq: the threat to leave immediately. Except for Sadr, virtually no one in Iraq's political class wants that to happen. We must wield that threat as dramatically as possible, and, if Iraq's leaders don't respond, leave as fast as we humanly can.

The vehicle for this last-ditch effort would be a conference of Iraq's leaders and Iraq's neighbors (along with Russia, which has more leverage over Iran and Syria than we do). The goal would be revising Iraq's constitution to guarantee Sunnis a generous share of the nation's oil wealth (which is practically Iraq's only source of wealth). This is precisely the guarantee that Shia leaders refused to offer after they won the January 2005 elections. And it is the only way to convince Sunnis to accept a new Shia- and Kurd-dominated Iraq. To give Shia leaders an incentive to agree, the United States should offer the biggest carrot possible: not just a continued U.S. troop presence, but a temporary troop *increase* and a dramatically larger, World Bank–overseen development effort. We should also offer the biggest possible stick: If the conference ends in failure, the United States should begin its full withdrawal that very day. (We'd leave some troops in the neighborhood for operations against Al Qaeda.)

Democrats often suggest a conference like this, but, in the next breath, they call for troop withdrawals in a few months. But telling the Iraqis we are withdrawing troops no matter what is not much better than telling them—as Bush essentially has—that we will keep them no matter what. It removes our only source of leverage.

If the Iraqis really strike a constitutional deal that the prominent leaders in all three major communities publicly support, the United States must try to make it stick. That would mean temporarily sending more troops to secure key Baghdad neighborhoods and then flooding those neighborhoods with public-works programs that put young Sunni and Shia men to work. The goal would be to weaken the militias and insurgents from below by diminishing the public insecurity and hopelessness on which they thrive—and to help Iraqi leaders weaken them from above by genuinely integrating them into a functioning Iraqi state. Such an effort would take years and cost American lives. But, in support of a far-sighted constitutional bargain crafted by Iraqis willing to challenge their communities (and risk their lives) to keep their country together, it would be a sacrifice worth making.

Is such a bargain likely, even at the point of a diplomatic gun? Hardly. Civil wars don't generally stop until the participants decide that bloodshed has lost its political utility, and Iraq's power brokers still seem to overwhelmingly believe the opposite. But it's worth one last try, as long as we are willing to take no for an answer. The Iraqi people didn't ask us to invade their country; they certainly didn't ask us to do so in criminally inept fashion. We at least owe them this. And, if we fail, we should have the decency to give refuge to those Iraqis who make their way out of that living hell and to our shores.

"Were not those right who held that it was self-contradictory to try to further the permanent ideals of peace by recourse to war?" wrote John Dewey in THE NEW REPUBLIC in 1919, confessing his despondency at the outcome of World War I. Yes, they were right then, and they are right now. War can be necessary, but, in the decade between the liberation of Kuwait and the liberation of Kabul, it became the repository for too many of our hopes for a better world. Now that we have seen the liberation and destruction of Baghdad, it won't be again for a long, long time.

PETER BEINART

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Obligations

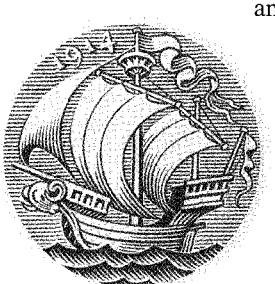
ALL THE STUDY groups, all the Council on Foreign Relations white papers, and all the magazine symposia in the world won't change the equation: There is no policy for Iraq that will provide moral and strategic satisfaction and no reason to believe that we might achieve something that could be plausibly described as victory. The coming debate over timetables and troop levels will likely generate much anger, shattering postelection illusions of bipartisanship and provoking intraparty squabbles. But, in the end, this struggle will be over the difference between a largely intolerable outcome and a completely intolerable one.

This magazine has long advocated deploying U.S. power to halt the mass slaughter of innocents. Saddam Hussein distinguished himself at the mass slaughter of innocents: About this, there can be no dispute. Yet, in this case, we supported an invasion that has led to the same savage result. Without an occupying power—and, perhaps, with one—Iraq could soon witness refugee crises, the sectarian mêlée spilling into neighboring countries, Al Qaeda bases sprouting across the Sunni Triangle, and massacres still greater than those that have already transpired.

America's role in creating this Mesopotamian hell does not diminish our moral obligations. It increases them. Even an arch-realist like Colin Powell understood that when we broke it, we owned it. And, before we throw up our hands and enjoy the catharsis of walking away, we must exhaust every attempt to minimize further nightmares.

While the Republican defeat on November 7 may have politically foreclosed the possibility of sending more troops to Iraq, it was never clear where those troops would come from anyway. And, though it closed off one option, the election has also created new, if limited, possibilities. It sent an important message to Iraq's elite: The U.S. presence in Iraq will not last long. Perhaps this new political reality will serve as shock therapy, scaring Iraq's warring factions into negotiations that can prevent the worst sectarian warfare. But perhaps not.

More importantly, the elections may terrify the Bush administration into a new course. While the administration's defenders claim that it has exhausted diplomatic possibilities, this is true only in the sense that it has conducted grudging and occasional conversations with important regional players. But diplomacy is not just a cozy exercise in endless speech acts. It, too, must be brutal: It must include threats and promises, alliances and coalitions—with the threat of being left out. A new campaign should lay the groundwork for agreements prior to the calling of a peace conference that would include Iraq's parties and its neighbors, as well as the United States, the European Union, and Russia. What kind of agreement could be worked out? Separate states, a loose federation, a unified government? That's not clear—and won't be until the parties involved make their wishes known and negotiations begin. After all, Iraq was artificially created by the British after World War I. Its citizens may not be able to come together except through the imposition of a dictatorship. It may be that a federation is more appropriate, as it has been in the Balkans.



Many Democrats have embraced a proposal called "phased redeployment," a politically expedient way of saying immediate withdrawal. Their proposal, which calls for departures beginning in four to six months, doesn't allow the time and space for the arduous work that a political settlement requires—the kind of agreement that will ultimately allow us to leave with the least damage to the Iraqi people and our own interests. Proponents of "redeployment" might argue that the president will enact any new course as ineptly as he did before—a very reasonable fear. But, having achieved new majorities, the Democrats must use their oversight capability to ensure that this does not happen. This can no longer be a one-party war.

At this point, it seems almost beside the point to say this: THE NEW REPUBLIC deeply regrets its early support for this war. The past three years have complicated our idealism and reminded us of the limits of American power and our own wisdom. But, as we pore over the lessons of this misadventure, we do not conclude that our past misjudgments warrant a rush into the cold arms of "realism." Realism, yes; but not "realism." American power may not be capable of transforming ancient cultures or deep hatreds, but that fact does not absolve us of the duty to conduct a foreign policy that takes its moral obligations seriously. As we attempt to undo the damage from a war that we never should have started, our moral obligations will not vanish, and neither will our strategic needs. ■

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IRAQ: WHAT NEXT?

GEORGE PACKER
SAVE WHOMEVER WE CAN

A FEW DAYS AGO, THE BROTHER of my friend Osman was one of seven Sunni workers in a shop in a mixed neighborhood of western Baghdad who were rounded up at gunpoint by Mahdi Army militiamen and taken to the local Shia mosque. There, they were taunted about Saddam Hussein's death sentence and then, one by one, shot in the head. Osman's brother was only grazed and survived. But, when the bodies were loaded into a pickup truck and brought to a nearby Iraqi Army checkpoint, a soldier in uniform noticed that he was still alive. "Let's see you stay alive now," the soldier said and shot him again, through the eye. Somehow Osman's brother survived the second bullet, too, though he lost his eye and his brain began to swell up. He was taken to a Baghdad hospital in critical condition. The ministry of health is dominated by Moqtada Al Sadr's movement, and, when I called Osman while he was visiting his brother one night, he had to leave the room before talking with me: It was too dangerous to be overheard speaking English on his cell phone. After a couple of days, Osman, who is a doctor, decided the hospital was too dangerous and unsanitary. He smuggled his brother back into their house, but word of his survival has spread. And, if his brother's name was on a death list, Osman's name will quite likely be on one now, too.

Osman (not his real name, which he asked me not to use) has spent the last two years working with Western journalists in Iraq. He never told anyone in his family, concocting elaborate lies when, for example, he recently traveled to London to collect a prize. He has a scholarship to study journalism in the United States starting in the fall of 2007. I would like him to leave Iraq sooner. But it isn't easy for an Iraqi to get out.

Recently, I asked my friend what he would do if U.S. forces began to withdraw from Baghdad. Osman, an utterly secular Sunni who despises the religious extremists of both sects, replied, "I would have to be protected by Al Qaeda." Between the Sunni jihadists who would immediately take over his area and the Shia death squads hunting down people with his quintessentially Sunni name, Osman would be forced to choose the former. He has begun to establish connections with the extremists in his neighborhood to win their trust. "I would have to obey their rules," he said. (Their rules against blue jeans, shorts, Western-style haircuts, and women driving cars carry the death penalty.) "We'll be happy to do it because they will give us their protection—at first." Over the long run, the jihadists would establish a reign of terror, as they have done in the towns of Anbar province that have come under their control.

When the war in Iraq was an insurgency, there was a chance of ending it with a better counterinsurgency and, ultimately, politics. Once it took the form of a civil war, America's role became increasingly marginal and precarious. I saw this vividly during my last trip to Iraq, at the beginning of the year, and it accelerated shortly after my return, when Al Qaeda bombed the Shia shrine in Samarra. When we tried to withdraw from Baghdad in the summer, the violence spiked. When we poured more troops into Baghdad in the fall, the violence spiked. The status quo is untenable. More troops would have made a difference in the first or second year of the war, but no longer. So U.S. policy has to change.

The shape of that change has already been much discussed by experts, and it will be further discussed in the new Congress, in the Baker-Hamilton Commission, in other places. The best outcome of these discussions would be a general recognition, among Democrats and rational Republicans, that the war the administration has fought is lost. But how we leave will be as consequential as how we arrived. A precipitous U.S. withdrawal could bring as many disasters to Iraq, the Middle East, and the United States as the precipitous invasion brought. We

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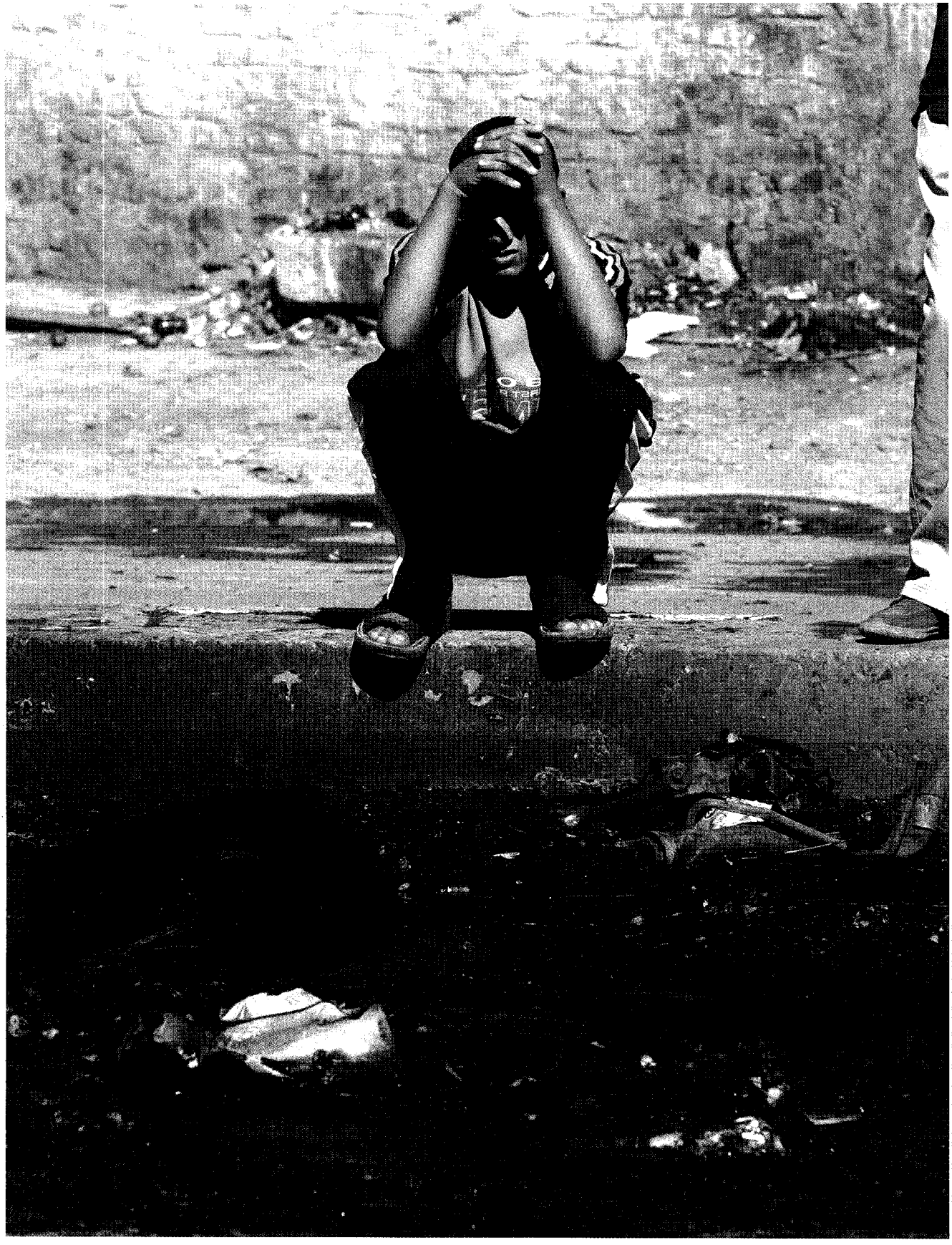

THE AFTERMATH OF A CAR BOMB, NOVEMBER 9, 2006

ALI JASIM/REUTERS/LANDOV

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should let the Iraqi government know that our continued support—the numbers of troops, their rate of departure, the training and advising of Iraqi forces, the money spent on reconstruction—depends on its progress toward a political settlement between the warring factions, if possible with the involvement of Iraq's neighbors. There are many reasons to think that this, too, will fail. If it does, the United States will have to face the hard fact that it can no longer play any constructive role in Iraq, other than simply to slow down the rate of disintegration.

But this is the language of policymakers, and I don't want to devote my contribution to proposals that they are professionally better equipped to make. I want to talk about something else. Withdrawal means that the United States will have to watch Iraqis die in ever greater numbers without doing much of anything to prevent it, because the welfare of Iraqis will no longer be among our central concerns. Those Iraqis who have had anything to do with the occupation and its promises of democracy will be among the first to be killed: the translators, the government officials, the embassy employees, the journalists, the organizers of women's and human rights groups. As it is, they are being killed one by one. (I personally know at least half a dozen of them who have been murdered.) Without the protection of the Green Zone, U.S. bases, or the inhibiting effect on the Sunni and Shia militias of 150,000 U.S. troops, they will be killed in much greater numbers. To me, the relevant historical analogy is not the helicopters taking off from the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, leaving thousands of Vietnamese to the re-education camps. It is the systematic slaughter by the Khmer Rouge of every Cambodian who appeared to have had anything to do with the West.

If the United States leaves Iraq, our last shred of honor and decency will require us to save as many of these Iraqis as possible. In June, a U.S. Embassy cable about the lives of the Iraqi staff was leaked to *The Washington Post*. Among many disturbing examples of intimidation and fear was this sentence: "In March, a few staff approached us to ask what provisions would we make for them if we evacuate." The cable gave no answer. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad does not issue visas. Iraqis who want to come to the United States must make their way across dangerous territory to a neighboring country that has a U.S. Embassy with a consular section. Iran and Syria do not; Jordan has recently begun to bar entry to Iraqi men under the age of 35. For a military translator to have a chance at coming to the United States, he must be able to prove that he worked for at least a year with U.S. forces and have the recommendation of a general officer—nearly impossible in most cases. Our current approach essentially traps Iraqis inside their country, where they will have to choose, like Osman, between jihadists and death squads.

We should start issuing visas in Baghdad, as well as in the regional embassies in Mosul, Kirkuk, Hilla, and Basra. We should issue them liberally, which means that we should vastly increase our quota for Iraqi refugees. (Last year, it was fewer than 200.) We should prepare contingency plans for massive airlifts and ground escorts. We should be ready for desperate and angry crowds at the gates of the Green Zone and U.S. bases. We should not allow wishful thinking to put off these decisions until it's too late. We should not compound our betrayals of Iraqis who put their hopes in our hands.

Since hearing the story of Osman's brother, I've been unable to get out of my head the British poet James Fenton's "Cambodia," written after Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge:

> One man shall smile one day and say goodbye.
> Two shall be left, two shall be left to die.
>
> One man shall give his best advice.
> Three men shall pay the price.
>
> One man shall live, live to regret.
> Four men shall meet the debt.
>
> One man shall wake from terror to his bed.
> Five men shall be dead.
>
> One man to five. A million men to one.
> And still they die. And still the war goes on. ■

George Packer has covered the war for The New Yorker *and is the author of* The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq.

RICHARD A. CLARKE
ADMIT IT'S OVER

Americans tend to think we can achieve almost any goal if we just expend more resources and try a bit harder. That spirit has built the greatest nation in history, but it may be dooming Iraq. As the head of the British Army recently noted, the very presence of large numbers of foreign combat troops is the source of much of the violence and instability. Our efforts, then, are merely postponing the day when Iraqis find their way to something approaching normalcy. Only withdrawal offers a realistic path forward.

Too often in the Iraq debate, we have let intuition, slogans, and appealing thoughts cloud logic. Perhaps the most troublesome example is the argument that we must honor the American dead by staying until we can build something worthy of their sacrifice. Stripped of its emotional tones, this argument is, in economic analysis, an appeal to sunk cost. An MIT professor once promised to fail me if I ever justified actions based on sunk cost—so I learned that what is gone is gone, and what is left we should conserve, cherish, and employ wisely.

A similarly illogical argument for staying in Iraq is that chaos will follow any near-term U.S. withdrawal. The flaw lies not in the concept that chaos will happen, but rather in thinking that chaos will *only* happen if we withdraw in the near-term. Chaos will almost certainly follow any U.S. withdrawal, whether in 2008 or 2012.

A more refined argument to extend our stay is that the calamity following a 2008 withdrawal would be worse than the chaos after a 2012 departure. But how can we have strong confidence in such a prediction—which assumes that more time means progress—when the United States and Iraq have produced so little in the way of progress thus far? Even granting that chaos after a 2008 pullout may be worse than what would follow a 2012 withdrawal, is the difference between those two levels of disas-

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ter worth the cost? This cost comes in American dead and wounded, Iraqi dead and wounded, billions of dollars in military expenditures, the continued damage to U.S. influence in the world, and the further strengthening of radical Islamist terrorists everywhere. We cannot have high confidence that the cost is worth whatever improvement there would be in the two levels of post-withdrawal chaos.

Another emotionally charged argument against withdrawal is that Al Qaeda will be emboldened by our departure. But are we to conclude that, if we make a mistake, we should continue to make it lest our enemies gloat? Al Qaeda is already sufficiently emboldened. The additional motivation it will derive from seeing U.S. forces leave Iraq cannot be accurately measured and is likely to be inconsequential.

There is also the argument that Al Qaeda will turn Iraq into a terrorist base if we leave. But Al Qaeda has already done that, and we are providing the targets in the shooting gallery. Advocating a near-term withdrawal of U.S. combat divisions is not the same as the United States foreswearing to act in Iraq in the future. We should declare that we will act, with the Iraqi government or without, to prevent Iraq from becoming a terrorist haven after we depart. Pursuing the terrorists in Iraq does not require 150,000 troops; it can be done with intelligence capabilities, U.S. Special Forces, and airpower—much of which can be based in Kuwait. Moreover, the Iraqis themselves may rid the country of Al Qaeda once that becomes their responsibility. Already, Sunni groups opposed to the U.S. presence are taking action against Al Qaeda.

We can pursue our core interests in Iraq—ensuring that the country does not become a terrorist base and that it does not destabilize the rest of the region—without a large occupying force. To do this, we should announce our intention to reduce U.S. forces in Iraq beginning in December and concluding with the withdrawal of all major ground combat units within 18 months; declare that the United States seeks no permanent military bases in Iraq; gain permission from Kuwait to station additional combat units there to create an "over the horizon" capability to deal with terrorists in Iraq; accelerate the training and equipping of the Iraqi army with embedded Special Forces; work with our regional allies to create an enhanced covert action capacity to combat Iraq-based terrorism; speed up U.S. reconstruction efforts; and convene a regional process to guarantee the stability of Iraq, inviting Iran, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, and the Gulf countries to join.

Are there problems with this plan? Of course. But our current approach—maintaining that we can fix Iraq if we just try a bit harder—is likely more seriously flawed and more costly than the alternative. Still, President Bush insists on staying in Iraq, and it is easy to understand why. In *The March of Folly*, Barbara Tuchman documented repeated instances when leaders persisted in disastrous policies well after they knew that success was no longer an available outcome. They did so because the personal consequences of admitting failure would be very high. So they postponed the disastrous end to their policy adventures, hoping for a deus ex machina or to eventually shift the blame. There is no need to do that now. Everyone already knows who is to blame. It is time to stop the adventure, lower our sights, and focus on America's core interests. And that means withdrawal of major combat units. ■

Richard A. Clarke served 30 years in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the White House. He is the author of AGAINST ALL ENEMIES *and the forthcoming novel* BREAKPOINT.

DAVID RIEFF
BRING THE TROOPS HOME

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, CAN be done in Iraq? Any serious consideration of what to do next must be grounded in a clear-eyed view of what the current reality is on the ground, both in Iraq and in the United States. And those realities are stark indeed. With the single exception of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, *none* of the strategic goals of the American planners of the war have been realized.

Far from being a harbinger of a "new," democratic Middle East, present-day Iraq seems like a cautionary tale in just how murderous societies can become when the dead hand of dictatorship is removed. The elections, so often adduced by supporters of Saddam's overthrow as the vindication of the invasion, in fact resulted in voting almost exclusively by ethnic and confessional group. And Iranian domination of Iraq's southern Shia heartland, which is the antithesis of what Washington anticipated, proceeds apace, as Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani withdraws from the scene and the Tehran-backed radical cleric Moqtada Al Sadr increasingly becomes the guarantor of the government in Baghdad. What is the current state of play in contemporary Iraq? Starkly put, one that suits the interests of Tehran, of independence-minded Kurds, and, of course, of Al Qaeda and the Baathists, who are getting better, not worse, at killing and wounding Americans.

Small wonder then that, as the recent U.S. elections demonstrated, the American public has grown fed up with the entire venture. Whatever the motives of policymakers in the Bush administration and the democratic dreams of both neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle and liberal interventionists like, er, well, the editors of THE NEW REPUBLIC, it was the belief that Saddam had, or was on the brink of acquiring, weapons of mass destruction that made the invasion of Iraq acceptable to the American public. Today, the combination of the facts that Saddam did not have WMD and that the democracy project has proved to be a sick and sanguinary joke means that support is rapidly ebbing for an invigorated prosecution of the war.

It is in this straitjacket that the question of what the United States should do next in Iraq has to be considered. For, just as it is entirely correct to demand that people considering future options not indulge themselves in rehashing the Bush administration's myriad follies and stupidities, so it is equally correct to insist that to posit, say, the deployment of a further 50,000 or 100,000 U.S. troops, and to argue that the United States must "double down" militarily in Iraq and win the war, no matter how long it takes and what toll it exacts in lives, suffering, and money, is also a form of self-indulgence.

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It may make sense militarily, but it is a nonstarter politically. Senator John McCain may talk of the need for more troops on the Sunday talk shows, but candidate McCain does not want to go into the 2008 election with the United States continuing to take casualties in Iraq at the present rate, let alone at the accelerated one that expanded operations would surely entail. And, if McCain would find this impossible politically, there is no way that his potential Democratic opponents—such as Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, or whatever other frontrunners emerge in the upcoming electoral cycle—will run on any platform other than "bring the troops home."

So, in an important sense, the question of what to do next is already moot. The United States is leaving Iraq, and sooner rather than later. All that remains to be debated seriously—as opposed to the window-dressing and cant that will be deployed to "cover" this withdrawal—are the modalities of our departure. The rest is self-indulgent wishful thinking, think-tank war-gaming, and collective exercises in closing the barn door after the horse has bolted. Would McCain's plan for victory in Iraq work? Personally, I doubt it, but it is certainly possible. Does his plan have a realistic chance of being implemented? No, not the slightest chance.

Under these circumstances, my own view is that the United States should withdraw from Iraq as quickly as possible. It is one thing to ask soldiers to kill and to die in a war that the country is still committed to prosecuting in earnest. But it would be the height of immorality to demand such sacrifices when the only questions are when we will withdraw and how the fig leaf covering our decision will be draped around us.

Mocking Senator John Kerry is practically an obligatory sport in Washington these days. But Kerry's eloquent words to that Senate committee more than 30 years ago are as relevant today as they were then. Who *would* want to be the last soldier to die for a mistake? Would you want anyone you loved to be such a person? Would you volunteer yourself for that terrible fate?

At the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1968, while his policemen were beating up the demonstrators along the Loop and in Lincoln Park, Mayor Richard Daley apparently told Lyndon Johnson that it was time to pull the troops out of Vietnam, once and for all. "How am I to do this?" Johnson asked pleadingly. To which Daley is said to have replied: "You put the fucking troops on the fucking planes and you get them out of there!"

Apart from protecting the Kurds, whose possible acquisition of statehood may be the only good news of this whole dreadful adventure—America's Sicilian Expedition, I fear—there is no longer anything we can do. And the Kurds can probably look after themselves anyway. It is time to put the fucking troops on the fucking planes. Now! Before any more of our children die for their country's hubris. ■

David Rieff's most recent book is AT THE POINT OF A GUN: DEMOCRATIC DREAMS AND ARMED INTERVENTION.

ROBERT KAGAN
SEND MORE TROOPS

THE WIDESPREAD DESIRE TO GET out of Iraq is producing much wishful thinking about how such a withdrawal can be accomplished and at what cost. The common theme of most proposals—including those rumored to be dominating the thinking of the Baker-Hamilton Commission—is that the only solution in Iraq is political, and perhaps also diplomatic, rather than military. The common flaw in each of these proposals is that no political solution can be achieved without a measure of military success by the combined forces of the U.S. and Iraqi armies.

The problem in Iraq, until now, has not been the administration's failure to recognize the necessity of a political solution. Nor is it that the administration has set its sights in Iraq too high. For quite some time now, officials throughout the government, including the White House, would have been delighted to accept an outcome other than a perfectly unified Iraq if it could plausibly allow the country to sustain itself even for a year without descending into bloody civil war. As for the question of democracy, the administration's efforts to support democratic government in Iraq have been more pragmatic than idealistic. The alternative to democratic government in Iraq is some form of authoritarian rule. But where is the strongman who can take control of Iraq? Would he be Sunni or Shia? Placing either sectarian group in charge would only set off civil war. As a practical matter, not as an idealistic matter, no government can succeed in Iraq that is not based on a bargain between the different sectarian groups, and no bargain will be sustainable that does not in some way reflect the people's desires.

No such bargain can even be reached, however, without a minimum level of order and security in Iraq. Unless the majority of Iraqi people can be protected from terrorist bombers, insurgents, and death squads, they will not be able to negotiate and sustain any political settlement. When the U.S. and Iraqi forces fail to guarantee their security, they naturally look to their own sectarian forces for protection.

The expectation that a U.S. withdrawal or "phased redeployment" will force Iraqis to reach some kind of accommodation with one another has been disproved by three years of painful experience. American officials have been promising to begin drawing down U.S. forces in Iraq since the beginning of the occupation. Roughly every six months, Pentagon officials have announced their intention to cut the force levels in half within a year. Each of these drawdowns was supposed to follow various milestones of political success—an election or the establishment of a new government. But each anticipated political breakthrough has been undermined by new spikes in insurgent attacks. The problem has not been a lack of political progress, really, but a lack of military progress to sustain political advances.

It is precisely the illusion that a political solution is possible in the midst of rampant violence that has gotten us where we are today. What's needed in Iraq are not more clever plans but more U.S. troops to provide the security to make *any* plan workable. Even those seeking a way out of Iraq as soon as possible should understand the need for an immediate surge in U.S. troop levels to provide the stability necessary so that eventual withdrawal will not produce

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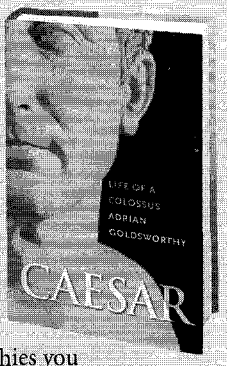

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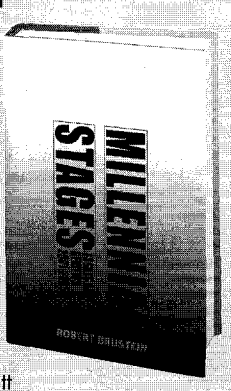

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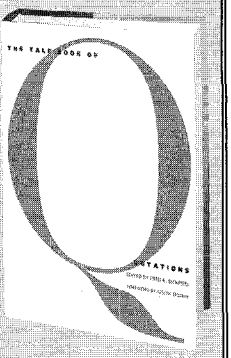

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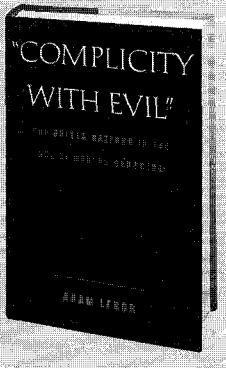

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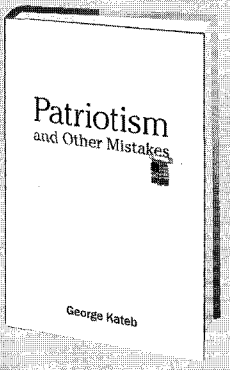

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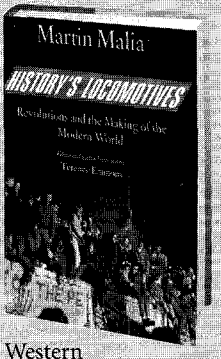

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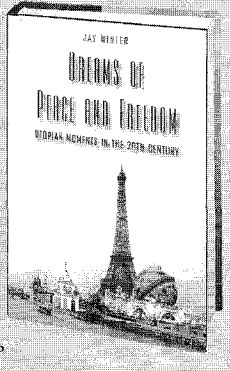

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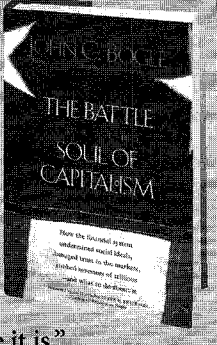

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chaos and an implosion of the Iraqi state.

The first priority ought to be to secure Baghdad, which U.S. policy has disastrously failed to do. To accomplish this, the United States should send an additional 50,000 troops at least, the bulk of them to Baghdad so that the city can be made safe for its inhabitants, but without drawing forces from elsewhere in the country. Once Baghdad is secure, U.S. and Iraqi forces could extend their operations into Sunni-controlled areas. This will take time. But a secure Baghdad would provide at least one pillar on which any eventual political settlement could be based.

Some claim that we don't have 50,000 troops to send to Iraq. In fact, the troops are available. Sending additional forces to Iraq means lengthening troop rotations, as the United States has done in previous major conflicts. Sustaining such an increased deployment, however, will require a substantial increase in the overall size of the Army and Marines. This increase, which does not require a draft but does require money, is necessary regardless of what we do in Iraq. It is stunning that this administration has attempted to fight two wars and has envisioned other possible interventions with a force clearly inadequate for these global commitments.

WE SHOULD NOT KID OURSELVES ABOUT the cost of failing to create a relatively secure situation in Iraq. The sectarian violence we are seeing today will seem minor compared with the massive bloodshed of a genuine Iraqi civil war. The idea of a "phased redeployment" implies a smooth, gradual process whereby U.S. military forces withdraw and Iraqis peacefully adjust. It's almost impossible to imagine events unfolding that way. Once we begin the process of U.S. withdrawal, there will be an eruption of violence to fill the vacuum. International terrorist groups will find themselves unchallenged in parts of Iraq and able to establish new bases from which to launch attacks against the United States and its allies. It is fanciful to imagine that the Iraqis themselves will take action against these groups: They will have their hands full fighting one another.

Under these circumstances, any "redeployment" of U.S. forces "over the horizon" would be short-lived. Withdrawal is, in this sense, an illusion. Many who favor withdrawal assume we will be able to tolerate whatever follows in the wake of our departure. This is a bad prediction of American behavior. The chances that President Bush—or a President McCain, President Clinton, or President Obama—will be able to stand by and allow Iraq to become the next Afghanistan are small. It would be far better to improve the situation in Iraq now, while we still have a chance. The alternative is to withdraw, allow Iraq to implode—and find ourselves, one or two years down the road, having to fight our way back in. ■

Robert Kagan is the author of DANGEROUS NATION.

PETER W. GALBRAITH
DIVIDE IRAQ

THE PARTITION OF IRAQ HAS ALready taken place. Our choice now is simple: We can acknowledge this reality and try to make the best of a bad situation, or we can continue to resist it at the cost of American and Iraqi lives. This does not necessarily mean that Iraq will split into separate countries in the short term (although the eventual independence of Kurdistan appears inevitable). For now, it simply means accepting a very loose federal system in which Kurds, Shia, and Sunnis take almost complete control of their own affairs.

Iraqis themselves have clearly chosen disunity. In the December 2005 elections, Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds all voted by overwhelming margins for parties identified with their own communities. No Iraqi party received significant support from both Kurds and Arabs. Meanwhile, more than 98 percent of Kurdistan's voters chose full independence in a nonbinding referendum conducted eleven months earlier.

These divisions are reflected in Iraq's constitution, a document approved by nearly 80 percent of Iraqi voters. It recognizes Kurdistan as a de facto independent region within Iraq and allows other parts of the country to form their own such regions—which the Shia are now doing. Under the constitution, these regions may have their own armies and substantial control over oil resources in their territory. What's more, regional law in most cases overrides federal law.

On the ground, the Iraqi state has disintegrated. Kurdistan is, in almost all regards, an independent state. The Iraqi flag is banned and Kurdish law prohibits the Iraqi army from entering the region. Iraq's Shia south is governed by religious parties that enforce Islamic law. Large parts of the Sunni Triangle are controlled by insurgents and their sympathizers, while the rest of central Iraq is a battleground. In other words, the Iraqi central government is a fiction, since there is no place in the country where it actually governs. Hence the folly of a strategy based on having the Iraqi government meet certain benchmarks: Even if all factions represented in the government could agree on a program of action, the government has no power to make it happen.

The Bush administration's exit strategy—building up the Iraqi army and police so that Iraqis can eventually take responsibility for the country's security—is only making things worse. In circumstances of civil war, government security forces are partisans to a conflict, not unbiased guarantors of public safety. This is, of course, why administration officials go to such convoluted lengths to insist that Iraq is not in the midst of a civil war. But saying it isn't civil war doesn't make it so. And Iraq's security forces are, in fact, active combatants in the civil war. Shia police units are responsible for the kidnapping, torture, and execution of thousands of Sunnis; and the ranks of Sunni policemen include many insurgent sympathizers—or even insurgents. The army is also split along sectarian lines. Training and equipping Iraq's security forces, as the United States is doing, only produces more lethal combatants in the country's internecine conflict.

HOLDING TOGETHER A NATION THAT DOES not want to be held together is difficult and costly. And it is increasingly hard to argue that it is worth the effort. For the United States, there is only one good alternative: to accept the partition that Kurds and Shia have already set in motion and to start withdrawing U.S. troops from most of the country.

This is not to say partition would pro-

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ceed peacefully. As Iraq divides, two major territorial disputes will likely arise—one over Kirkuk, the other over Baghdad. The Iraqi constitution provides for a referendum to resolve the status of Kirkuk and other areas contested between Kurds and Arabs. U.S. diplomacy, so far completely absent on this issue, could help entrench power-sharing among all of Kirkuk's communities prior to the vote so that the losers are more likely to accept the results. As for Baghdad, today we are bystanders as the city violently divides itself between the Sunni west and the Shia east, and, unless we are prepared to become the city's police, there is little we can do to stop the bloodshed.

The other major impediment to partition would come from the Sunnis. Even as Shia and Kurds have moved toward partition, Sunnis have resisted it, partially out of nostalgia for the days when they ran all of Iraq. But, because the Sunnis could have their own army in a Sunni region, partition actually provides them some protection against domination by the more numerous Shia. In the end, with Kurdistan already in place to the north and "Shiastan" quickly forming to the south, the Sunnis will have little choice but to create their own autonomous region in between.

Among its other virtues, partition could head off Al Qaeda from establishing a permanent base in the Sunni areas of Iraq. Clearly our current approach of using Shia troops—whom we call Iraqi but whom the Sunnis see as alien—to fight insurgents has not worked; but encouraging the Sunnis to establish their own autonomous region and to raise a Sunni army might. There are compelling economic and political reasons for the Sunnis to eliminate Al Qaeda once they, not the Shia, are the ones doing the fighting.

Of course, there is a risk that an autonomous Sunni region would not be willing or able to defeat the Al Qaeda elements of the insurgency, and, for this reason, the United States needs a residual force in Iraq. Kurdistan is the logical place to put it. It is adjacent to the Sunni areas, and its own army, the *peshmerga*, is the only reliably pro-American indigenous military force in the country. And the Kurds love President Bush. After all, he wrecked Iraq. ■

Peter W. Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador to Croatia, is the author of THE END OF IRAQ: HOW AMERICAN INCOMPETENCE CREATED A WAR WITHOUT END.

A U.S. HELICOPTER FLIES OVER A BLAST SITE IN CENTRAL BAGHDAD, NOVEMBER 13, 2006

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REZA ASLAN KEEP IT WHOLE

IT IS A MEASURE OF JUST HOW UNmanageable the war in Iraq has become that an increasing number of politicians and foreign policy analysts are subscribing to Senator Joe Biden's plan to partition Iraq into independent Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish "statelets." On the surface, partition seems like an attractive option. After all, the argument goes, Iraq is already bitterly divided along sectarian lines. Partitioning the country would only formalize what is taking place on the ground.

But, despite portrayals to the contrary, Iraq is not so cleanly divided along sectarian lines. The homogenization of Iraq's neighborhoods results more from a lack of security than from a hardening of ethnic or sectarian identities. In a country where the police and armed forces have failed to provide any semblance of protection, allying oneself with a sect, if not a sectarian militia, has become quite literally a matter of life and death. Nevertheless, most Iraqis continue to identify themselves first and foremost as members of individual clans, many of which cross ethnic and sectarian lines through intermarriage and ancient alliances.

In any case, partitioning Iraq would in no way solve the country's most intractable problem: how to divide oil revenue evenly. Considering that the vast majority of Iraq's oil fields reside almost exclusively in the Shia south and the Kurdish north, it is not difficult to imagine how partition could lead to the permanent exclusion of the Sunnis from what is practically Iraq's sole source of revenue. This would likely result in an even greater sense of alienation among the Sunnis and, consequently, increased sectarian violence. Partition could even lead to a regional war, as Iraq's neighbors, such as Turkey and Iran, are forced to deal with the chaotic aftermath of a fractured Iraq.

What the partition plan ignores is that, despite the country's rapid descent into chaos and the government's deadlock on fundamental issues like revenue-sharing, the Iraqis have done a masterful job of coming together to lay the groundwork for a unified, viable state. The Iraqi constitution provides a template for a united yet pluralistic nation. The Iraqi electorate has, on more than one occasion, proved that it is interested in having a stake in the future of the country. And the fractious government, in spite of its bumbling ineffectiveness, has nevertheless managed to come to terms on issues of mutual concern that would have been inconceivable a mere year ago. Indeed, the fact that the Iraqi government remains standing despite a devastating civil war is in itself a miracle.

It is absurd to argue, as President Bush repeatedly has, that "success" in Iraq is impossible to achieve until Iraqis themselves decide whether they want to live in a free society or not. Of course Iraqis want freedom. But they want security even more. Providing this security must become America's primary, if not sole, responsibility in Iraq. Rather than altering Iraq's geographic demography, perhaps it is time to alter U.S. policy, specifically by transitioning from an offensive strategy—intended to root out insurgents and what the president calls "Al Qaeda types"—to a defensive strategy, whose purpose is to keep Iraqis alive long enough for them to rebuild their civilian and political infrastructure.

In practical terms, this would involve redeploying U.S. troops from the relatively stable Kurdish north and Shia south so as to create a ring of security around the perimeter of Baghdad, Tikrit, Ramadi, and Najaf. Such a plan would require the participation of the majority of America's 150,000 troops. It also would require the assistance of Syria and Iran, if for no other reason than to help shore up the country's porous borders. Finally, it would necessitate a political settlement with the Iraqi nationalists and former Baathists who make up some 90 percent of the insurgency and who have demonstrated that they are willing to negotiate through their proxies in the parliament. All three of these nemeses—the nationalist insurgents, the Syrians, and the Iranians—share a visceral hatred for the United States and would like nothing more than to see the failure of America's plans for the Middle East. But, on two

SUPPORTERS OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN TIKRIT, NOVEMBER 5, 2006

NUHAD HUSSIN/REUTERS/LANDOV

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